## DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EDD)

# Performance management: its impact on heads in international schools

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**Performance management: its impact on heads in international schools**

Simon Geoffrey Taylor

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**Contents**

**Tables and Figures**

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**Abstract**

In this thesis I explore performance management, its impact on heads of not-for-profit international schools and possible links to tenure (length of service). In this study, international schools are those offering a curriculum that is not of the host country (Hayden and Thompson, 2013) and that have an international outlook or international values (Bunnell, Fertig and James, 2016). These schools are generally governed by boards responsible for employing a head of school and for managing his or her performance.

There is a paucity of research on performance management of heads in not-for-profit international schools though two notable studies exist on tenure. In the first of these, Hawley (1994:1995) reports that, in US accredited schools overseas, the average (median) tenure of heads is 2.8 years. In the second, Benson (2011) reports the average (median), for those in schools who are members of the European Council of International schools (ECIS) and/or the Council of International Schools (CIS), to be 3.7 years. My research aimed to provide further insights by asking four questions:

1. How are heads of not-for-profit international schools prepared for their work?
2. How is performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools conceived, structured and organized?
3. How do heads of not-for-profit international schools perceive their performance management processes?
4. Does performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools appear to be linked to tenure?

Using a mixed methods approach that comprised semi-structured interviews with 10 heads of school and a questionnaire yielding data from a further 63 heads of school, I investigated the perspectives of heads in schools where a national system of performance management is not employed. My research revealed that formal regular performance management is not ubiquitous in these schools. Where performance management is found, it varies in terms of structure, regularity and effectiveness. Among the findings it was seen that formal and regular processes were more likely to lead to comprehensive feedback. Where the

relationship between the board and the head was one of partnership, processes were considered more effective and when expectations and the setting of criteria were shared, tenure was longer. The average (median) tenure of heads was found to be 5 years with a mean average of 6.9 years. However, the data suggest that performance management was effective in only about half the cases and did not seem to have any bearing on decisions relating to the tenure of heads. It was for other reasons, often personal, that heads left. In particular, the relationship with the board and the board chair appears to have been an important factor for those interviewed. This research offers some insights into the value of performance management and raises questions about its impact on tenure in the light of relationships with the board.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Strong evidence supports the idea that the head of school, the term chosen in this study for the school leader responsible for all operational aspects of the school, has a positive influence on student learning (Clifford and Ross, 2011; Day et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2008; Reeves, 2008; Krüger, Witziers and Sleegers, 2007; Barker, 2007; Harris, 2005; Witziers et al., 2003). As a professional educator for 40 years, I have a great interest in leadership in this context.

In reference to international schools, Haywood (2002) states clearly, “it is a well-established research finding that leadership (through heads, superintendents or principals) is the single most important contributing factor in creating a school’s ethos, identity and, ultimately, its success or failure as an institution.” Therefore, a critical role for a school’s governing body is to choose the right head of school and to work with him or her to ensure personal and institutional success. In the context of this study - international schools defined by Hayden and Thompson (2013) as offering a curriculum that is not of the host country and by Bunnell, Fertig and James (2016), as those that also have an international outlook or international values - performance management can be an important process in the board’s work and in the life of a head of school.

Performance management is a process which typically involves ongoing communication between the board and the head of school on the goals for the school, what is to be achieved by the head and assessment of how well those goals are being met by the head. In comparison to appraisal, Armstrong (2009, p.58) claims that performance management “is a continuous and wider, more comprehensive and more natural process of management that clarifies mutual expectations, emphasizes the support role of managers who are expected to act as coaches rather than judges, and focuses on the future.” Smith (2009, Foreword) expresses his view on the fundamental rationale for such a process and its use in general when he states: “The whole ethos of performance management rests on the assumption that if you can raise the performance levels of individuals, better organisational performance will follow.” This intimates that organisational performance is influenced by individual performances such as by the head of school.

The head of school's performance management can be seen to have two purposes: accountability and professional growth. In the first of these, the head of school is accountable to his or her employer for doing what is expected of him or her. To this end, clear expectations of performance should be understood, and preferably agreed, by both parties. The performance management process could therefore be expected to include a definition of success for the head of school and for the school itself; how success will be achieved; and in what way it will be measured. The second purpose is the professional growth of the head of school. Formative and summative feedback on skills and dispositions relating to the leadership and management of the school can support the head of school's professional growth. This should raise his or her individual performance which, in turn, should help the head achieve specific goals or standards and thus meet expectations related to school success.

In this research, I explore performance management as experienced by heads of not-for-profit international schools. Having worked for 35 years in such international schools, as teacher and head, I am keenly interested in this subject. It has received little attention in this setting yet could have great importance in the success of the head and therefore the school. Consequently, it could also have a bearing on his or her tenure which in this context, refers to the length of time in position.

Where once international schools were generally not-for-profit institutions (Clarke, 2014, para.7), designed primarily to support ex-patriates (Jonietz, 1991; Renaud, 1991), a great variety of schools calling themselves international have arisen in the last thirty years in line with a rise in globalization. Using a very broad definition, Gaskell (2019, slide 7) now counts over 10,000 English-medium international schools worldwide. They differ widely with the majority now being for-profit institutions that aim to serve the local national community. These changes within the field may have challenged traditional drivers of international education, their governance models and the roles of the heads of school. They may also have led to different definitions of success and approaches to performance management.

My study is focused on not-for-profit international schools with no mandated 'national' system of performance management for the head of school in place. These schools are found throughout the world. They are generally independent

and governed by a board of directors or trustees who usually have a high degree of autonomy in how they are structured, their model of governance, policy determination and how they operate in general. Typically, this means that it is a board who are responsible for the appointment of the head of school, his or her performance management, the board's relationship with him or her and contractual agreements. As many heads of school are ex-patriates, I have seen that most are given time limited term contracts. This generally means that ongoing employment is not a right. Under these conditions, boards can choose whether to retain heads of school or not at the end of a contract. With this being so, it seems reasonable to speculate that, if the performance management of the head of school is effective and school success is evident, the board will be more disposed to renew a contract and prolong a head of school's employment than if his or her performance is not perceived to be satisfactory.

The tenure of the head of school – meaning the length of time in position - is an important matter. From a Canadian perspective, Fullan (2007) claims that five years is the minimum time needed for a leader to make a difference in a school. Littleford (2005), who has extensive experience of independent schools in the US and international schools, believes it takes longer.

> "The Head's impact on the school only begins to occur after years 8-10 when parents, past parents, board members and alumni begin to feel a debt to the current head for the success of their children and the fund raising potential begins to pay off. The years of substantive contribution are often 8-15 and more."
> (Littleford, 2005, p 4)

One can postulate that effective performance management could contribute to the success of a head of school and, with that, raised organizational performance. This in turn could lead to extended contracts and longer tenure which may itself result in more success for the school. Thus, through effective performance management, a virtuous cycle of success and longer tenure could be established. Conversely, with a poor or absent process of performance management, the risk of misaligned, unspoken, unwritten or changing expectations inevitably increases the risk of misunderstanding and discord between those responsible for the overall welfare of the school, usually the board, and the head of school. The potential

consequences may be important with respect to organizational performance and consequently the head of school's employment. A lack of success may lead to limited tenure which may restrict success further; a vicious cycle may result.

Two major studies on the tenure of heads of international schools have been undertaken. In the first, Hawley (1994:1995) undertook research in US-accredited overseas schools and found that the average (median) tenure of the 196 heads of school was 2.8 years, with less than 4% staying seven years or longer. In the second, Benson (2011) undertook a similar investigation of heads in schools belonging to the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) and/or the Council of International schools (CIS) and found that of the 83 who participated, the average (median) tenure was 3.7 years. Both these studies indicate that tenure could be considered short. Of interest is the view of Littleford (1999) who contends that nearly 80% of heads are fired. Perhaps importantly, Benson (2011) and Krüger, van Eck and Vermeulen (2005) note that the board is cited as a major reason for heads leaving in many cases.

In this study I aim to investigate the performance management of heads of international schools and its possible impact on their tenure – length of time in position - by addressing the following research questions:

1. How are heads of not-for-profit international schools prepared for their work?
2. How is performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools conceived, structured and organized?
3. How do heads of not-for-profit international schools perceive their performance management processes?
4. Does performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools appear to be linked to tenure?

My research focuses on the experience of heads of school during one completed headship in a not-for-profit international school.

My literature review begins with a brief outline of the history and nature of international schools after which I turn to the governance of these schools. The board usually plays a central role in the performance management of heads of

school so a critique of the research on board membership; theories and models of governance; board's roles and responsibilities; board functioning; and board performance follows. I then consider the work of a head of school and examine leadership and management. This includes the following: theoretical models; school leadership; head of school selection; school selection by the head of school; and head of school orientation. The latter touches on my first research question directly - How are heads of not-profit international schools prepared for their work? Thereafter, I review the research on the relationship between the board and head of school, along with the special relationship between the board chair and the head of school. I conclude this part of the literature review with a brief section on quality management and the head of school. This leads to a focus on performance management.

In my review of the literature related to my second research question – How is performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools conceived, structured and organized? Here, I discuss approaches to and expectations of performance management. I then approach my third research question - How do heads of not-for-profit international schools perceive their performance management processes? I critique the literature on the effectiveness of performance management as a process and what research suggests are the characteristics of a good performance management process. Following this I consider my fourth research question - Does performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools appear to be linked to tenure? A summary of my literature review concludes this chapter of my thesis.

In the methodology chapter, I discuss the theory behind the mixed methods approach I use and the detail of its application in the empirical part of my study. By employing "mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions" (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), I hope to avoid the limitations of the two ontological paradigms highlighted by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011): "Just as positivistic theories can be criticized for their macro-sociological persuasion, so interpretive and qualitative models can be criticized for their narrowly micro-sociological perspectives."

By employing a qualitative method at the outset, I aim to understand the personal experiences of heads of school using the framework of my research questions.

My research begins with SKYPE interviews with ten heads of school. Being semi-structured, each question leads to open exchanges. The interviews yield rich data which allow for the identification of key ideas relating to performance management in schools. These I use to inform a questionnaire for the quantitative part of my study. The questionnaire was sent to all members of the Academy of International School Heads (AISH). From an estimated 250 heads who have led the types of schools included in this study, the data from 63 were included in the research.

I present the research data in my Findings section. Both data sets are interesting and provoke thinking on the performance management of heads of school. In my Discussion chapter, I examine the effectiveness of my methodology then look in more detail at what the data reveal and how it compares to other research in this domain.

In my Conclusion, I highlight why I believe this research adds to the body of knowledge on this topic. It reveals weaknesses in the ways that schools plan for success and how they manage the path to success through the performance management of the head of school. I uncover what works and what does not work with respect to performance management, the effects of each on success and any perceived link with head of school tenure. I close the thesis with a summary. Here I collect my thoughts on how the study should help boards and heads of school as they plan for success. I also consider how this study might provoke further thought and perhaps more research on the performance management of heads of school in international schools or perhaps in other independent schools. My thoughts on what I have learnt from this research complete the work.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

### 2.1 History and nature of international schools

> "If I had a pound for every essay that has been made at defining international education, I would surely be a good deal richer than I am now. If I had read them all, however, I am not sure that I would be much further along towards a comprehensive definition: what constitutes or should constitute an inter-national education remains a complex and controversial matter." (Mattern, 1991, p.209)

Mattern might agree that the first two truly international schools, defined here as those which set out specific international aims in their foundational documents and therefore whose aims were as much philosophical as pragmatic (Hill, 2001, p11), are generally thought to be the International School of Geneva and Yokohama International School, both founded in 1924 (Stanworth, 1998). Following the Second World War, the number of international schools with broadly similar aims and structures began to grow (Bunnell, 2007a). The growth in international schools continued apace with the expanding world economy such that by the end of the 1980s, Matthews (1989) estimates that there were 1000 international schools. However, it was globalization at the turn of the 21st Century that led to a rapid increase in the number of international schools worldwide so by 2000 there were 2584 according to Brummitt and Keeling (2013, p.27). As a head of international schools over 22 years, I noted that many individuals, groups and organizations were establishing for-profit schools seemingly aimed at addressing a demand among ex-patriate and local communities for some form of international education. This observation is supported by Clarke (2014, para.7) who noted that 80 percent of enrolments were by 2014 host country nationals and that the majority of these schools were for-profit. Such was the surge that Keeling (2015, para.2) believes that by November 2015 there were 8000 English-medium international worldwide. One year later, Keeling (2016, para.1) asserts that "the insatiable appetite for English-medium, Western-style education for children continues to expand around the world." With such growth, the definition of an international school has grown well beyond what Mattern could have imagined. To understand the context of this study, it is worth looking at this development.

Leach (1969) was one of the first to define international style schools. He claimed that they fell into four categories that can be summarised as follows: elite private national schools with an international perspective; overseas schools offering home education to expatriates: trans-national schools such as the European schools; and 'genuine international schools' that could be members of the International Schools Association. Matthews (1989) simply divided international schools into those that are market driven and those that are ideological, a position later supported and expanded upon by Cambridge and Thompson (2004). Hayden and Thompson (2013), who have long been associated with international schools, have gone further and grouped schools into three categories: A, B and C. Type A and Type B schools are deemed traditional and either have essentially pragmatic goals or ideological goals. The former, Type A, would include schools helping mobile expatriate families while they are overseas, while the latter, Type B, would be those set up with a particular philosophy, such as internationalism. Type A and Type B schools are not for-profit. Type C are considered non-traditional as they are for-profit and often cater to host country nationals. Some are proprietary, others are international offspring (Hayden and Thompson, 2013) of established UK or US independent schools, while many are branches of large business groups.

Hallgarten, Tabberer and McCarthy (2015) feel there are four distinctive characteristics that international schools share, though recognise they are beginning to change. These are: an international mix of students; international governance; an internationally-minded teaching force; and an international curriculum and/or instructional practices while Bunnell, Fertig and James (2016) intimate that international schools should also have an international outlook or international values. The International Schools Consultancy Group (ISC) has a much broader conceptualization. It includes a school if it calls itself international and,

> "delivers a curriculum to any combination of pre-school, primary or secondary students, wholly or partly in English outside an English-speaking country, or if a school is in a country where English is one of the official languages, offers an English-medium curriculum other than the country's national curriculum and is international in its orientation." (ISC Research, 2019, para.6)

With this catholic approach, a wide spectrum of schools come under the umbrella of being international and are counted as such. Looking through the lens of Scott's work on institutionalisation, Bunnell and Fertig and James (2016) might challenge the legitimacy of some of these schools being considered international. Gellar (2002) too would likely not agree with the ISC Research perspective. He states that there are only two distinguishing features of international schools – an international curriculum and a set of ethical universal values. This firmly places the Gellar in the 'ideological" school of thought. Hayden and Thompson (2013, p4) point out that, in essence, there is only "one main characteristic found in all schools that describe themselves as international schools or would be considered by others as deserving that label: they offer a curriculum that is not of the host country." The International Baccalaureate is one example of an international curriculum. It was developed by the International Schools Association (ISA) as a university preparation course with an international perspective that would offer a smooth transition from school to university (Hill, 2015). It has since become the Diploma Programme, one of four IB programmes for students of different ages that were developed primarily for international school students and offered by many schools. (IB, 2020)

Different types of international schools have emerged over time while others may have drawn closer to each other through standards associated with the introduction of international accreditation, such as that offered by the Council of International Schools (CIS), and the advent of curriculum programmes such as the International Baccalaureate (IB). The traditional schools of Type A seem now to share much with those of Type B. Type C schools may share some aspects of Type A and Type B schools but differ in key areas, most notably in being for-profit. While some might believe this could have a bearing on the governance and leadership of the school, for this research, I have chosen not to exclude them entirely.

The international schools in this study, from which heads have drawn their experience, are broadly those defined by Hayden and Thompson (2013) as Type A or B and offering a programme that is not of the host country. However, they are also in keeping with the views of Bunnell and Fertig and James (2016) in having an international outlook or international values. Most, if not all, are governed by a board. I now look at the board's governance work.

## 2.2 Governance of international schools

It is generally a board that is the highest authority in not-for-profit international schools. Usually, it is responsible for fiduciary matters, strategic planning, generative discussions, the hiring of a head of school, his or her performance management, contractual agreements and terminations. (Chojnacki, 2007) In the context of this study, the board therefore plays an important role.

School boards may consist of members, directors, regents, trustees or governors, depending on the legal status of the school. The terms are often used synonymously though there are nuances.

> "Trustees are the same as members, directors, regents, or governors, but the term trustee implies more of a custodial function that is appropriate for social-benefit, as opposed to investor-benefit, organizations" (Harvey and Tropman, 2009, p.28)

In the US, there are legal differences where a trustee "is held to a higher fiduciary standard than a director of a non-profit corporation" (Carter, 2016, para.3). Nonetheless, for the purposes of this research, trustees will be considered synonymous with other terms used for school board members.

The membership of boards differs, even in not-for-profit schools. The size of the board and its composition; its status, with elected members, appointed members or both; the terms of office, as fixed or not, as well as the number of terms that a member can serve, are some of the more common elements that vary (Bunnell, 2007b). In some schools, parents elect board members from their own community of parents while in other schools, parents elect diverse members from a broader school community. School boards can also comprise members appointed by companies, embassies, a higher board or chosen by the current parent board members. Such boards are often self-perpetuating meaning that they appoint their own members. Hybrid boards comprising combinations of appointed and elected members are also possible. In a survey of school boards, Tangye (2005) found that 23% were self- perpetuating, 23 % were fully elected, 13% were fully appointed and 41% were some combination. Sorenson (2015) found that 46% were appointed, 19% were elected, 30% were a hybrid and 5% another model.

Neither survey specifies whether the schools are for-profit or not-for-profit. Knobloch (2016), in his survey of the latter, found 47% were appointed, 11% elected and 42% elected and appointed.

Hodgson and Clark (2005) express concern that elected boards can be the result of popularity contests while Fisher (2011) and Littleford (2008) warn of the negative effects of high turnover commonly found in elected parent boards. The latter goes further, in the context of US independent and international schools, in referring to parent elected boards as “time bombs”. He expands on this:

> “Parent trustees are the most loyal, generous, committed and energetic of all trustees. At the same time, they are the dominant cause of unhealthy day school governance because they can be the most “hysterical” and impulsive board members when incidents arise that may affect directly their own child, the child of a friend or a favoured [sic] disgruntled teacher(s).” (Littleford 2008, para.20)

Littleford’s remarks clearly point to what he sees as common issues with this type of board. For these reasons, he favours self-perpetuating boards. However, a fundamental question is whether structure and membership lead to certain characteristics or patterns of behaviour? Hawley (1994:1995) found that the tenure of heads was longer when a board comprised more members who did not have children in the school. Similarly, Fisher (2011) found,

> “there was a distinct difference in the length of service of heads across schools with different models of governance. The clearest result was that those schools with a high number of parents on the board, i.e. either parent elected boards or mixed boards, had double the rate of turnover of both heads and chairs when compared to schools with other models.” (Fisher, 2011, p.118)

While national law may determine the fundamentals of the organisation, including the structure, membership and broad functioning of the board, the school’s own statutes often define the framework for governance. Within this framework, the board will adopt a model of governance each with its own characteristics. Each model has an underlying paradigm, the basic philosophical underpinnings of which

will likely influence the way a board functions, its relationship with the head of school and its perspectives on performance management. In general terms, governance, “refers to the ‘pattern of rule’, which is concerned with regulation, direction and procedure” (Balarin et al., 2008, p.10). The various approaches to governance, seen in theories and models, may define the relationship between the board and the chief executive officer (CEO). In this review and in the context of schools, I see the CEO as equivalent to the head of a not-for-profit international school. Both are responsible for the day to day operations of the organisation and typically report to a board. Cornforth (2012, p.1120) points out that there has been a shift from when governance between the public, private and voluntary sectors was treated differently to a situation where “the boundaries between the sectors have become blurred”. Theories and models abound. Balarin et al. (2008, p39) offer a typology of approaches to governance. (Table 2). Of these, two theories that are particularly common in corporate settings: agency theory and stewardship theory. They can also be found in schools.

Agency theory

The basic tenet of this theory is the belief that human nature will lead an appointed CEO of an organisation, termed the agent, to act in his or her own self-interest rather than in the interests of the owner(s) or board, termed, the principal. In short, the agent is considered an adversary of the principal (Brown, 2005). As the board delegates control it is reliant on the agent for information and services (Bernstein, Buse and Bilimoria 2016). The board must therefore monitor the agent closely to ensure that the principal’s goals are being met. This can be done through audits and performance evaluations. An alternative way to exert control is to bring the agent in line with the principal’s goals. External motivation, in the form of incentives based on company success, are aimed at focusing the agent’s efforts in a transactional relationship (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997; Van Puyvelde et al., 2012). However, Van Puyvelde et al. (2012) question the efficacy of this in a not-for- profit environment because it is difficult to define measurable goals. According to Brown (2005, p.322), when this model is found in not-for-profit organisations, the board’s role is often to ensure the agent’s adherence to the mission and “not allow the organization to engage in activities outside their bylaws or statutes”. Irrespective of what is chosen, total principal control could be counter-productive, certainly in cost and time, since the principal would then be doing the work of the agent. Overall, the nature of this approach is principal control

and mistrust of the agent. In summary, Balarin et al. (2008, p.39) summarise agency theory as a compliance model.

Stewardship theory

This theory is the antithesis of agency theory as it is based on the premise that human nature is such that a CEO and a board will seek collaboration and a relationship of trust (Bernstein, Buse and Bilimoria, 2016; Sundaramurthy and Lewis, 2003). This is likely to happen in one of two circumstances:

1. The agent will act in the best interest of the principal even if their interests diverge, because in doing so they will accomplish higher personal outcomes of achievement, affiliation and self-actualization (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997).
2. The principal's and agent's goals are perfectly aligned because of a commonality of interests (Sundaramurthy and Lewis, 2003).

This model is based on facilitation and empowerment of the agent, the CEO or head of school. Power is the basis of influence and is built up over time in the form of a relationship between the principal and the agent (Davis, Schoorman and Donaldson, 1997). Balarin et al. (2008, p.39) refer to this model as a "partnership model" while Sundaramurthy and Lewis, (2003, p.397) call it a "collaboration model". Table 1 outlines further distinctions between the two models discussed. In their research, Bernstein, Buse and Bilimoria (2016) claim that among 474 organizations studied there appears to be more evidence for foundations of agency theory, than for stewardship theory.

Other theories and models may also be found in schools. They vary in terms of balance between monitoring and control, and support.

Resource dependency theory

In this model board members bring technical competencies (financial or legal, for example) to an organization to provide strategic direction to the organisation. Jean Francois (2015, para.669) states that "resource-dependence theories recommend interventions by the board while advocating for strong financial, human, and intangible supports to the executives" which, Brown (2005) adds, brings value to

the organisation. So, while supportive and even collaborative, there is still a degree of monitoring and control.

Table 1. Contrasting approaches to corporate governance. (Sundaramurthy and Lewis, 2003, p.398)

Control  Collaboration

| Agency theory (economics and finance) | **Theoretical basis** | Stewardship theory (sociology and psychology) |
|---|---|---|
| | **Assumptions** | |
| Individual Opportunism | **Human tendencies** | Collectivist Cooperation |
| Extrinsic | **Motivation** | Intrinsic |
| Goal conflict (risk differential) Distrust | **Management-owner relations** | Goal alignment (firm identification) Trust |
| | **Prescriptions** | |
| Discipline and monitor | **Board's primary role** | Service and advise |
| Outsiders Nonduality | **Board Structure** | Insiders, social ties CEO duality |
| Reduces goal conflict, avoids increasing risk differential | **Executive stock ownership** | Fosters firm identification and long-term relations |
| Constrains self serving behavior | **Market for corporate control** | Curbs psychological commitment |

Stakeholder theory

Stakeholders are those who have a vested interest in the organisation. Oliver (2002) believes that this theory only defines the composition of the board as members of the community and board members' accountability as the stakeholders in the community, rather than a philosophical approach. However, Jean- Francois (2015) believes that the approach is clear: a not-for-profit board is primarily responsible for ensuring that the ethical practices of the organization are sound. The theory does not extend to how the board will carry out its function nor

any underlying principle with regards to the relationship with the CEO/head of school. In a school context specifically, Bassett and Moredock (2013, para.1) consider such a model to be 'fatally flawed' as they believe the focus is on the short-term interests of the members rather than the longer strategic interests of the organisation and inclined on too many occasions toward a crisis posture that undermines school leadership and board governance".

Corporate theory

Bassett and Moredock (2013) advocate the corporate model for independent schools. In this model, a self-perpetuating board chooses its successors and is primarily focused on strategy that it believes to be in the best interests of all stakeholders, not only parents. The board evaluates the work of the CEO/head of school but is very much 'hands off' with regards to operations. In a different not-for- profit context, in reference to not-for-profit organisations in Canada, Bradshaw et al. (1998, p.7) criticise this model for the risks of being too distant, too focused on business outputs rather than inputs and that "self-interest becomes more important than public interest". In schools, the latter could refer to parents. Nonetheless, Bassett and Moredock (2013, para.4) maintain that as a recurring theme in school governance is of trustees who are too 'hands on' control and too often act as guard dogs. They favour the corporate model where, they claim, trustees act more as guide dogs and thus more supportive.

Policy governance theory - the "Carver Model"

Policy governance theory, eclipses others, according to Oliver (2002). This theory, set out by John Carver, is based on ten principles that explain the purpose, structure, roles, responsibilities and functioning of a board (IPGA, 2016). One of these is the evaluation of the CEO/head of school. In this theory, policies are created which define the space in which the CEO/head of school will lead and manage the organisation. Board members monitor activities covered by policy. The board does not generally control how ends are achieved, except perhaps when ethical issues arise, only whether the results are achieved in accordance with policy. If the board does not specify specific measurable outcomes the CEO/Head of school may legitimately choose how outcomes are measured. Support may be distant. Bassett and Moredock (2013) have reservations about this theory. While they see this as a viable model, they are concerned about the

lack of strategic and financial oversight of the board. Bradshaw et al. (1998) also point out that, in their view, the model inhibits innovation.

Table 2. Theories and models of leadership. (Adapted from Balarin et al., 2008, p39)

| Theory | Interests | Board Members | Board Role | Model |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agency theory. | Owners and managers have different interests. | "Owners'" representatives. | Compliance/conformance: safeguard owners' interests, oversee management, check compliance. | Compliance model. |
| Stewardship theory. | Owners and managers share interests. | Experts. | Improve performance: add value to top decisions/ strategy, partner/support management. | Partnership model. |
| Resource-dependence theory. | Stakeholders and organisation have different interests. | Chosen for influence with key stakeholders. | Boundary spanning: secure resources, maintain stakeholder relations, bring external perspective. | Co-option model. |
| Stakeholder theory. | Stakeholders have different interests. | Stakeholder representatives: elected or appointed by stakeholder groups. | Balancing stakeholder needs: balance stakeholder needs, make policy/strategy, control management. | Stakeholder model. |
| Corporate theory. | Stakeholder's interests. | Selected members | Strategic and for stakeholders. | "Hands off" model. |
| Policy governance theory. | Organisation's interest. | Elected or chosen members. | Policy creation and operational oversight. | Policy model. |
| Democratic Theory | Members' or community interests. | Lay representatives | Political. Policy and control of executive. | Democratic model |

Democratic theory

Many international schools might consider their governance model to be democratic, particularly where board members are elected by the community. However, as boards are rarely institutionalised political systems, I suspect that these school might better be described as stakeholder models. The democratic theory does not specify how the board will function only that it will work in the interests of the those who elected the members. These members may have no link to the school other than through their election.

In not-for-profit service organisations, Viader and Espina (2014) found that 52% are driven by agency theory, 28% by stewardship or resource dependency theories and 20% are hybrids of these. Figures for international schools were not found. Although there are many theories and models, Bradshaw et al. (1998, p.11) conclude that there is no agreement on the best way to govern a not-for-profit organisation, a position supported by Marx and Davis (2012). Bradshaw (2009, p.62) therefore proposes a contingency approach rooted in “the understanding that what works in one setting, or at one point in time, may not work in another and that efficiency is related to the ongoing alignment of various contingencies”. While other models point to various power relationship between a board and a head of school or the weighting of the two roles of control and advisory, these are generally fixed. The contingency theory would see a more fluid arrangement where relationships change according to circumstance. The fundamental hierarchy of authority in each model, whether institutionalised or temporal, is likely to not only shape the working relationship between the two parties but influence the process for performance management of the head of school.

Tellingly, Chait, Ryan and Taylor (2005) believe “trusteeship – conceptually and practically – to be remarkably unaffected by several generations of learning about leadership and organizations”. They hold that there is a lack of discussion around the real meaning of governance and that the focus is solely on the ‘dos and don’ts’. The work of a not-for-profit board, suggest Chait, Ryan and Taylor (2005), is defined simply by three roles: fiduciary, strategic and generative. A simple summary is also seen in the UK Department for Education (DfE, 2019) directive in that states that governance involves three core functions:

- “Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.”
  (DfE, 2019, p.9)

In relation to international schools specifically, Hodgson (2015) takes a slightly different approach to what needs to be done by a board. She believes that there are four tasks for which a board must take responsibility:

1. “The relationships and the distribution of rights and responsibilities among those who work with and in the organisation.
2. The rules and procedures through which the organisation’s objectives are set.
3. The means of achieving those objectives and monitoring performance.
4. Assigning accountability throughout the organisation.”
(Hodgson, 2015, P.15)

Such guidance could be useful to a board reflecting on what it should do. Unity of purpose, along with well understood roles and responsibilities, should help ensure effective and efficient board functioning.

The authors of the International Trustee Handbook, produced by National Association of Independent Schools (Chojnacki, 2007), see a nuanced relationship between the roles and responsibilities of a board and those of a head of school where the balance between the decision-making role and the advisory role will vary depending on the work. Cumberland et al. (2015, p.450) hold a similar view about not-for-profit boards and, interestingly, show how four models of governance that can be seen in four distinct roles for boards of non-profit organisations:

> “Monitor- Evaluation of head of school and financial oversight
> (Agency theory)
> Support – Securing finances and legitimizing the organisation
> (Resource dependency theory)
> Partner - Setting mission and values and assisting in strategy and planning
> (Stewardship theory)
> Represent – Advocating on behalf of constituents
> (Stakeholder theory)”
> (Cumberland et al., 2015, p.450)

The authors see evaluation of the head best done through agency theory suggesting accountability is the primary purpose. While there is a logic to adopting different theoretical models for different aspects of a board’s work, this demands in practice flexible thinking and behaviour with respect to the working relationship between the head of school and the board, as well absolute clarity on who is doing what and when. Yet, even when one theoretical approach is known and agreed, not-for-profit boards can interpret their roles and responsibilities in different ways (Wright and Millesen, 2008; Brown and Guo, 2010; Cornforth and Edwards, 1999). As the latter states, this can be a result of a,

> “complex interplay of institutional and organisational factors: the way the organisation is regulated; the traditions and norms of governance in the sector; the history of the organisation; the way board members are chosen; board members' skills and experience and the way the boards are organised and run”. (Cornforth and Edwards 1999, p. 359)

Cultural, social, and political factors coupled with personal competencies, experience, characters and dispositions of board members may influence the organisation, direction and overall functioning of the board. Hayden (2006, p.118) identifies two distinct elements within international schools that may also have a strong influence, these being “the relative transience of some board members …. and the multicultural mix of the board members linked, perhaps, to varied previous experiences and expectations based on other cultural contexts”. Hawley’s research (1994:1995) suggest that when there is high turnover and a large cultural mix, the head of school tenure is shorter than under other conditions. The work of Kakabdse, Kakabdse and Knyght (2010) is pertinent to this context. They refer to

the processing of new encounters and new information as sense-making which they state is a dynamic process that brings together present knowledge with the new through cognitive and emotional aspects of interaction to form a new understanding or reality. The appointment of a new board member or head of school - as the latter often sits on a board – will likely result in flux. Under any circumstances, the head of school and board members will need to establish a working relationship where there is a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and associated expectations as well as an agreement on the process of performance management.

James et al. (2010, p.3) note the need for competent boards and state: “The lack of a capable governing body is not a neutral absence; it is a substantial disadvantage for a school.” A board needs to function efficiently and effectively, something that typically does not happen by accident. While Gabrielsson et al. (2007) believe that the board chair should be viewed as ‘first among equals’ rather than ‘commander in chief’, it is the board chair who is expected to ensure that this happens. The selection of board members, state Baker et al. (2015, p.84), is where it starts and suggest that schools should seek those who “exhibit the ability to suspend personal motivation and have the capacity to work well with others in a collaborative setting” Professional development can be critical. Brown (2007) considers training a good predictor of better board performance, a position held by Earley (2003) who believes that more training is needed to ensure that governors of schools are professional. Provocatively, in 2002, Wilkinson asked the following about international school governance:

> “Is there a need to recognize that governance at the school level requires vision and inspiration beyond that which individual school boards have either the competence or the time to achieve?” (Wilkinson, 2002, p.164)

And yet, school-specific board member training opportunities in international schools, are limited. Boards may need help. Bruni-Bossio et al. (2016) identify four factors of dysfunction related to board roles in not-for-profit organisations, along with associated reasons for their occurrence. These can be summarised as follows:

- Role cognizance factor - Lack of awareness of roles
- Role ambiguity factor - Confusion of roles
- Role crafting factor - Lack of discussion of role
- Role execution factor - Challenge in execution of role.
  (Bruni-Bossio et al., 2016)

When we look at the way that boards work, we see different advice on the principles of good practice - what needs to be done and the characteristics of a good board. Board Source (2005, p.1), based in the US, list twelve principles of governance that it claims power exceptional not-for-profit boards in general: “Constructive partnership; mission driven; strategic thinking; culture of inquiry; independent-mindedness; ethos of transparency; compliance with integrity; sustaining resources; results-oriented; intentional board practices; continuous learning; and revitalization.” These seem sensible yet do not mention any attributes that board members should perhaps exhibit. In the UK, the Department for Education (DfE) mentions member’s attributes as one of six key features of good governance:

1. “Strategic leadership that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy.
2. Accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance.
3. People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity.
4. Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
5. Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements.
6. Evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.”
   (DfE, 2019, p.9)

Interestingly, the Independent Schools Council and allied association, also in the UK, focus more on the characteristics of an effective board with an outline of roles, responsibilities and tasks:

1. “Understanding their role and responsibilities collectively and individually…
2. Ensuring delivery of the school’s purpose …
3. Working effectively both as individuals and as a team…
4. Exercising effective control as an accountable body …
5. Behaving with integrity ...
6. Being open and accountable …”

(Independent Schools Council, n.d., p.1)

The International Trustee Handbook, produced by the National Association of Independent Schools (Chojnacki, 2007), is a guide designed for international schools. It also describes principles for a board that concern taking responsibility for the mission and vision; policy; strategic direction; top level financial, legal and community matters; hiring the head; and reflecting on the performance of the head and the board in meeting the mission and vision of the school.

Referring to UK state schools, Balarin et al. (2008) differentiate between input factors and process factors and summarise their research findings as follows:

> “The largest discrepancies between effective and ineffective governing bodies in what could be described as input factors – those aspects that need to be in place for the governing bodies can work well – are in:
>
> • the clarity of understanding of role and responsibilities
> • the extent to which there is a shared common vision
> • the provision of good quality relevant information to the governing body.
>
> The largest differences between effective and ineffective governing bodies in what could be described as process factors – the ways the governing bodies work – are in:
>
> • the extent to which the governing body reviews how it works
> • the effectiveness of the chair
> • the extent to which members of the governing bodies can speak their minds.”
>
> (Balarin et al., 2008, p.48)

It can be seen that one of the most important roles of an international school board is to select the right person to take responsibility for the school. To manage the performance management of the chosen head of school will be equally important so the board's understanding of leadership and management is an essential starting point for its conceptualisation of the roles and responsibilities of a school leader and the attributes he or she should possess. In the next section, I look at school leadership beginning with a short overview of leadership and management in general.

## 2.3 School leadership

The distinction between leadership and management is worth mentioning at this point as boards may have specific thoughts on what they might want from the head of school. Rost (1991, p.111) distinguishes the two admirably (Table 3). I will use this framework in my understanding of leadership in this study as I still consider it to be clear and accurate.

Table 3. Comparison between leadership and management (Rost, 1991, p.111)

| **Management** | **Leadership** |
|---|---|
| Authority relationship | Influence relationship |
| Working with subordinates | Working with followers |
| Result based on coordinated activities | Result based on mutual purpose |
| Maintain stability– doing things well | Create change– doing the right things |

Different styles have appeared in schools over the years. Charismatic leaders are thought to be born with innate qualities and through charisma gain followers (Grint 1999); laissez faire leaders provide a logic of confidence between schools and the constituents while education is left to the teachers (Elmore, 2000); and situational leaders take a contingency approach using different approaches at different times (Fiedler, 1972). With the advent of the latter, there was a paradigm shift as a belief grew that leadership behaviour could be changed and that different skills might be needed in different circumstances. Hallinger (2003, p330) mentions that in the 1990s instructional leadership was common yet goes on to claim that there was a reaction to the idea that an effective leader was the sole owner of "expertise, power and authority", as seen in this style and in transactional models

employing extrinsic motivation. (Table 4) The author claims that other models, such as shared leadership, teacher leadership, distributed leadership and transformational leadership (Table 4), emerged where degrees of responsibility and autonomy were given to others in school. Transformational leadership is most closely aligned to Rost's view of leadership and was prompted by the work of Bass (1991, p.22) who summarises the differences between two key forms of leadership - transactional and transformational.

Table 4: Contrast between transformational and transactional leadership (Bass, 1991, p.22)

| Transformational | Transactional |
|---|---|
| Charisma:<br>Provides vision and sense of mission, instils pride, gains respect and trust. | Contingent Reward:<br>Contracts exchange of rewards for effort, promises rewards for good performance, recognizes accomplishments |
| Inspiration:<br>Communicates high expectations, uses symbols to focus efforts, expresses important purposes in simple ways. | Management by Exception (active):<br>Watches and searches for deviations from rules and standards, takes corrective action. |
| Intellectual Stimulation:<br>Promotes intelligence, rationality, and careful problem solving. | Management by Exception (passive):<br>Intervenes only if standards are not met. |
| Individualized Consideration:<br>Gives personal attention,<br>treats each employee individually,<br>coaches, advises. | Laissez-Faire:<br>Abdicates responsibilities, avoids making decisions. |

While these two models are still part of the current discourse on leadership, according to Hallinger (2003), there has been a re-emergence of leadership focused on instruction in the form of leadership for learning, according to later work by Hallinger and Heck (2010). However, Bush and Glover (2014) note that this model emphasises the focus of leadership rather than the process of leadership and so can be found within other models. It seems likely that whatever model is adopted, school leadership will involve working towards goals. However, how heads of school would achieve these is perhaps the challenge. In any case there is a prevailing belief, exemplified by Day et al (2009) that the necessary skills and attributes can be learnt.

The goals of education may be captured in a school's guiding statements. These are typically termed the mission, vision and values and would normally be expected to express the primary task of the institution, a term used by James et al. (2007) in the context of UK state schools. However, I think the term would be equally valid in international schools. James et al. (2007) go on to suggest that leadership is about enabling others in relation to the institution's primary task, something again that should resonate with international school leaders. Browning's view, with respect to Australian independent schools, is similar in that "the primary responsibility of heads in independent schools is implementation of the vision and strategic plan set by the governing body" (Browning, 2014, p.390). However, as international schools are found around the globe, the primary task of each school and the way it is led could be influenced at different levels by national laws, cultural norms, the socio-economic environment, other local regional factors and individual school guiding statements. As the school's success might be measured by the degree to which the primary task is fulfilled it will be important for the head of school to understand what is expected in leadership in his or her setting. This will be important for performance management.

In meeting the aims of the primary task there are those who would question the value of leaders (Grint, 1999; Glatter, 2006). However, others believe that the school leader has an impact on schools and student outcomes. Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010, p.5) write "You can't improve schools without leaders." Numerous authors, (Witziers et al., 2003; Harris, 2005; Barker, 2007; Krüger, Witziers and Sleegers, 2007; Reeves, 2008; Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008; Clifford and Ross, 2011) support this view. In the context of UK education, Day et al. (2010) summarise much on the value of leadership when they state:

> "The leadership of the head has a direct effect on teachers' expectations and standards. This includes the way they think about, plan and conduct their teaching and learning practices, their self-efficacy, commitment and sense of wellbeing, and their organisational loyalty and trust, all of which indirectly influence pupil outcomes." (Day et al., 2010, p.3)

It is worth noting that the authors found that success, as defined by leaders, was not only based on academic results but also on "personal and social outcomes; pupil and staff motivation, engagement and wellbeing…. and the school's contribution to the community." (Day et al., 2010, p.2). This supports earlier work by Harris, Day and Hadfield (2003, p.67) who state that, with respect to leadership, "whatever else is disputed about this complex area of activity, the centrality of leadership in the achievement of school effectiveness and school improvement remains undisputed." So, if leadership is needed, what would it look like? As with Harris, Day and Hadfield (2003) Bush and Glover (2003) see leadership as being about influence, values and vision:

> "Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision". (Bush and Glover, 2003)

From a US perspective, Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2004, p.3) report on 21 leadership responsibilities that are positively correlated with student achievement. These are: culture; order; discipline; resources; curriculum, instruction, assessment; focus; knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment; visibility; contingent rewards; communication; outreach; input; affirmation; relationship; change agent; optimizer; ideals/beliefs; monitors/evaluates; flexibility; situational awareness; and intellectual stimulation. The authors identify 66 leadership practices embedded within the 21. Gordon and Patterson (2006, p.205) would seem to challenge this approach and make the point that "leadership is relational, negotiated, and context-specific." They judge that "the normative, singular, and evolutionary tendencies of leadership theory are simplistic in their assumptions" and that "there is not one theory or model for a successful leader." I would agree yet there may also be strength in the argument that there are some common characteristics of successful school leadership. It is hard to refute the case for these responsibilities being valid in many, if not all, educational environments. From a UK perspective, Day et al. (2009) would appear to agree with Gordon and Patterson (2006), to a point, in that they believe there is not a one size fits all

profile for a perfect leader. However, they might also concur with Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2004), in believing that one can define a range of features seen in effective leadership:

> "There is no single model of the practice of effective leadership. However, it is possible to identify a common repertoire of broad educational values, personal and interpersonal qualities, dispositions, competencies, decision making processes and a range of internal and external strategic actions which all effective heads in the study possess and use." (Day et al., 2009, p.2)

Day et al. (2010) make ten claims about successful school leadership:

1. "Head teachers are the main source of leadership in their schools.
2. There are eight key dimensions of successful leadership.
3. Head teachers' values are key components in their success.
4. Successful heads use the same basic leadership practices, but there is no single model for achieving success.
5. Differences in context affect the nature, direction and pace of leadership actions.
6. Heads contribute to student learning and achievement through a combination and accumulation of strategies and actions.
7. There are three broad phases of leadership success.
8. Heads grow and secure success by layering leadership strategies and actions.
9. Successful heads distribute leadership progressively.
10. The successful distribution of leadership depends on the establishment of trust."

(Day et al., 2010, p.3)

Day et al. (2010) expand on point 2. The authors state that there are eight key dimensions in leading a school. These are to:

- "define the values and vision to raise expectations, set direction and build trust
- reshape the conditions for teaching and learning

- restructure parts of the organisation and redesign leadership roles and responsibilities
- enrich the curriculum
- enhance teacher quality
- enhance the quality of teaching and learning
- build collaboration internally
- build strong relationships outside the school community"

(Day et al., 2010, p.4)

Based on research from eight countries, Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010) offer a similar list of things to be done and Australian studies by Mulford and Silins (2011) and Drysdale and Gurr (2011) offer strategies for successful school principalship. In a meta-analysis of 56 empirical studies and three frameworks, Hitt and Tucker (2016) found five domains relating to effective leaders (shown below) with 28 specific practices associated with them:

a) "Establishing and conveying the vision
b) Facilitating high-quality learning experiences for students
c) Building professional capacity
d) Creating a supportive organization for learning
e) Connecting with external partners."
(Hitt and Tucker, 2016, p.542)

The findings of such research are seen in other models for effective principalship. In the US, Hall et al. (2015, p.5), on behalf of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), have developed the Principal Leadership Development Framework which, they state, "is grounded in the belief that growth of individual leaders and leadership teams leads to school and system growth that positively affects student learning." It consists of 17 descriptors of effective practice that are stated as having the biggest impact on school success. These cross the following four roles of the principal [school leader]: "visionary, instructional leader, influencer and learner and collaborator." (Hall et al., 2015, p5) In this form, research on international school leadership was not found. So, do the findings of research worldwide apply to international schools?

The multi-faceted role of a school head is perhaps even more complicated in an

international school. Fisher (2011, p.44) notes that there “appear to be some particular aspects to leading an international school which would add additional nuances to the tasks that normally confront the school head.” In addition to the leading of teaching and learning, heads of international schools can be responsible for the business operations of a school that cover finance and legal matters; human resources; communications; auxiliary services, hospitality and housing; as well as general campus management. The literature on leadership may suggest what to do in generic terms but rarely discusses how to lead or the attributes needed in differing settings. Herein may be the challenge. The approach to leadership may be important but the qualities of leaders, in terms of how they act, may be more important. While certain leadership styles are promoted, such as instructional and transformational leadership, I contend that contextually adjusted or contingent leadership needs to be considered even more so in international schools. Goleman (2000, p.13) may be correct when he states, “leaders need many styles”. In his article, he highlights the need to motivate and demonstrate emotional intelligence. This reminds us that the personal qualities and characteristics of leaders are important. In the literature on school leadership, these soft skills are mentioned more rarely. A leader’s ability to relate to staff, students and community, motivate, build trust, communicate effectively, listen, show empathy, inspire confidence and behave appropriately can be critical to success. Simkins (2005) also notes that leaders must consider the complexities and ambiguities in a school’s culture. However, in a transient multicultural environment, there may be different and fluctuating expectations relating to leadership; the balance between leadership and management; needed skills; and the key qualities, characteristics and dispositions of a head of school. Hill (2014) highlights the complexity:

> “Schools are often characterised by ambiguous goals, unclear technologies, and a constantly fluid membership whereby each new wave imports a confusing array of conflicting value systems which may hamper collaborative decision-making and diversify individual action.” (Hill, 2014, p.176)

Caffyn (2010) points to the interaction of various groups within the school community, both transient and permanent. He notes how “the unique context of international schools may contribute to significant micropolitical conflicts.” As Hill

(2014, p.182) notes: “Organisation ‘theory’ in a school setting is thus seen as visions or images of the world that the incumbents act out.” People, he says, construct their own meaning of reality which the head of school must recognise and respect.

> “A school leader has legitimate authority to act, but that will not be sufficient for sustained leadership if those actions are not in line with a moral order, values, beliefs and metaphors which are common to the staff, students and parents.” (Hill, 2014, p184)

Hill summarises well the challenge for an international school leader:

> “School leadership, particularly in internationally minded schools…, requires more observation of, deep reflection on, and contemplation about the existential realities of life, and an openness to multiple perspectives and other ways of thinking.” (Hill, 2014, p.176)

The complexity of being a head of school, particularly in an international environment, highlights the challenge of being successful. Are heads of school sufficiently trained for this role?

Many international school heads originate from the UK or the US so may have been trained for their respective national context. In the UK, heads of school were not required to have a formal qualification until 2004. Bush (1995, 2013) notes that an ad hoc approach to professional development was evident until the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) took an interest in school leadership and set up the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in 1997. Later, in 2000, the English National College for School Leadership (NCSL) was established. Among its aims was “to provide a single national focus for school leadership development, research and innovation” (Bush, 2006, p.509). The NPQH became a requirement from 2004 but only until 2012. While Bush, (2013, p.463) acknowledges there is limited empirical evidence to show that leadership development leads to school improvement, he maintains that “the case for systematic, specialized training for principals is persuasive, and increasingly accepted…” The NCSL became the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) in 2012 which itself was closed in 2018. However, various providers still offer the course. It has six content areas: strategy and improvement;

teaching and curriculum excellence; leading with impact; working in partnership; managing resources and risks; and increasing capability. It is stated on the Government UK website that participants will have the opportunity to develop 7 leadership behaviours: “commitment, collaboration, personal drive, resilience, awareness, integrity and respect. (Gov.UK, 2020)

In the US, a variety of organizations have offered training for principals (heads of school) but it was only in the 1990s that a standardization of efforts began, claim Roach et al. (2011). They further note that since then there has been an increased focus on standards and training with a convergence towards best (normative) practice, continuous development and alignment with the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, first published in 1996. Although Crow and Whiteman (2016) state that there is not a nationwide evaluation of school leadership training programmes in the US nor much research on candidates for those programmes, earlier work by Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012, p.25) identifies important characteristics of effective leadership programme design. These are:

1. “Clear focus and values about leadership and learning around which the program is coherently organized,
2. Standards-based curriculum emphasizing instructional leadership, organizational development, and change management,
3. Field-based internships with skilled supervision,
4. Cohort groups that create opportunities for collaboration and teamwork in practice-oriented situations,
5. Active instructional strategies that link theory and practice, such as problem based learning,
6. Rigorous recruitment and selection of both candidates and faculty, and,
7. Strong partnerships with schools and districts to support quality field based learning.” (Davis and Darling-Hammond, 2012, p25)

The Wallace Foundation (2012) outline five lessons in leadership training that essentially mirror the above. The work of the Education Development Center Inc. in creating an assessment of training programs is mentioned by the Wallace Foundation (2012, p13). One recommendation is that course should include the following: “vision for learning; school culture; instructional supervision;

management of resources and operations; ethical practice; and political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts". Interestingly, in contrast to the UK, a course would seem to offer more about awareness and understanding of context and less on the task of leading and developing teams.

While these perspectives on training in the US and England seem sound, both Hawley (1994:1995) and Benson (2011) found that the tenure of heads with international experience and training was longer than those who took positions without international experience but with national qualifications. Some American international schools may require principal credentials and some British international schools NPQH, but this is not universal. Often, it is only academic qualifications of a certain level that heads of school are expected to hold and experience is often cited in advertisements as desirable.

### 2.3.1 Head of School selection and orientation

This is an extremely important process as it is the point when the board chooses the person it believes should lead the school and who can achieve the goals it might have. The process is generally organised by the board itself though may involve external consultants. Typically, an open position is advertised internationally which normally means through international recruiting agencies and media. In my observations, advertisements generally begin with a description of the school, its history and a sense of what might lie ahead for the school. Usually, there follows more on the role, experience preferred and sometimes a list of preferred attributes for the leader. In some cases, there are pre-requisites. In a study of 84 advertisements for principals internationally, Roberts and Mancuso (2014) found the following were listed as the most common attributes sought: "a good communicator (93%); someone who embraces diversity (83%); someone who is an inspirational motivator (67%); someone with good interpersonal skills (67%); and someone with a sense of humor, approachable and friendly (62%)." Of 22 attributes, the least mentioned were: "a kind, gentle, patient leader (15%); someone who is humble (14%); a mentor/role model (12%); and someone who is creative (11%)." (Roberts and Mancuso, 2014) It was not specified how a board decides what attributes are necessary for the leader in their school. Roberts and Mancuso (2014) also looked at leadership styles and concluded that transformational leadership was the most popular.  School boards may be quite

particular about what they are looking for. On board expectations, Roberts and Mancuso (2014) quote Ralph Jahr - a consultant – who describes leadership searches as “looking for God on a good day.”

The second point at which boards can help ensure the right choice of leader is at the interview stage. In addition to the profiles and information on experience in curriculum vitae, recommendations will also have been sought from referees. Boards are then able to engage with candidates through interview. These may initially be online but onsite interviews have the advantage of allowing more personal contact and other constituent groups to contribute to the process. At the conclusion of interviews, the board typically makes an offer to the successful candidate.

Research suggests there may be weaknesses in selection processes. In Australia, Blackmore, Thomson and Barty. (2006) conclude that selection panels tend to choose people like themselves, a view that Walker and Kwan (2012) might supported based on their work in Hong Kong. While similarities could lead to closer relations, which could be desirable, it might not result in a leader that the school needs. Winter and Jaeger (2002) claim that principal selection is often undertaken by those lacking the right experience, a view shared by Walker and Kwan (2012) who question the overall competence of selection panels to run a fair and appropriate process. Schlueter and Walker (2008, p.14) maintain that research criteria may be lacking and that “districts rely on a feel of “fit” in determining which candidates to choose for positions.” While attributes expected of principals were sought when choosing principals (Palmer, 2016), the term fit, was often used as a selection criterion. Palmer (2016) sees this as a fit between the candidate and the selector rather than the candidate and the position. Although there is little research on how international heads determine whether a school is a good fit for them, LSC (2018, p.10) has found that, with respect to a potential new position “only 39% of leaders believe they have had sufficient exposure to school life to judge the likelihood of a good fit.” Nonetheless, 74% declare that ultimately it is “gut feeling” that determines the decision. While ten or so criteria are cited that relate to fit, 86% of heads regard the relationship with the governors and board as the most important for a successful outcome. The values of the school (78%) and the perceived the level of autonomy (74%) were also considered important. Perhaps it is no surprise that heads of school attributed lack

of success in the position to the following board issues: 60% micromanagement, 55% lack of clarity and 41.5% poor relations. A poor selection process and poor communication are cited by Krüger, van Eck and Vermeulen (2005) as reasons why principals left their positions prematurely.

Since 2006, the State of Victoria in Australia has produced clear guidelines for the selection of principals that include the composition of the selection panel, a requirement for a trained member on the panel and criteria for selection. (Victoria State Government, 2016). A clear and detailed guide to recruiting a head of school [headteacher] is also published in the UK by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). It too advises governors to seek expertise to support the process, particularly from those in human resources (HR) and education. However, in international schools there are no requirements or guidelines for those who select the head of school.

Once the head of school is appointed his or her orientation cannot be overstated, particularly in international schools where the cultural setting could be completely different to a head of school's last position. Barbaro (2015) identifies three phases of adjustment that cover two transitions, one work- and one life-related. He notes that "the shared relationship with the board, represents the greatest factor affecting the adjustment of a head to working in their first year in the role" and advises, among other things, that the board provides "realistic job previews" prior to entry and ongoing "check ins" during the first year. (Barbaro (2015, p.23). As Barbaro (2015) notes, these relations could be an important factor in successful adjustment. I now look at this relationship

## 2.4 Head of school and board relationship

Littleford (2007, p.26) makes it clear that: "Chairs and boards should have only one person who reports to them and that one person is the head of school." This being the case, the relationship between the board and the head of school is critical. Chojnacki (2007, p.107) believes it is "one of the most important determinants of the institution's strength and success" and that "a well-functioning relationship between the board and head is marked by mutual respect, frequent communication, openness, and candour." Not only does the relationship have a bearing on the effective functioning of a school (Heystek, 2006) but also on the

survival of the head of school. Barbaro (2015, p.288) believes that “the first and most critical way in which heads of school can work to prevent unwanted turnover involves successfully managing their relationship with the governance board.” So, what is needed for a successful relationship?

The underlying theory of the board’s approach to governance and the role of the head of school are fundamental to this relationship. It is here, in these relationships, that Bruni-Bossio et al. (2016) identify a couple of areas in Canadian non-profit organisations where tensions can arise between boards and CEOs. I believe these could equally apply to heads of not-for-profit international schools. The first is in the role-performance relationships in strategic planning and policy formulation. The authors feel that the balance of involvement between the board and the CEO must be agreed. The second is in the role-performance relationships related to empowerment and oversight of the chief executive. They see the central issue as the balance between the level of the CEO’s authority and autonomy and the board’s oversight of the CEO’s management roles and performance. Agency issues can arise when the board and the CEO do not share similar beliefs or goals or when priorities are different (Du Bois et al., 2009). This may be relevant when one considers the performance management of the head of school. Hayden and Thompson (2008) point out that the role boundaries between the head and the board are far from clear, and intimate that contextual factors can contribute to poor head-board relations.

It is the board chair, among board members, with whom the head of school will likely have most contact. One might speculate that if the board has done a thorough job in finding the right head of school and he or she has accepted the position knowing the model of governance; the respective roles and responsibilities of the board chair and the head of school; and the expectations relating to the school and its goals, then the relationship with the board chair should be successful. However, it would be naïve to take this as a given.

Scholars certainly agree that a positive relationship between a CEO and the board chair must be established for the success of an organisation which would surely include schools. (Cornforth and Macmillan, 2016; Hill and James, 2015; Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Knyght, 2010; Shen, 2003; Roberts and Stiles, 1999). The research does not reveal any magic formula for a good relationship though a

clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities and a commitment to shared goals will increase board performance according to some authors (Burton, 2000; Roberts, 2002). History and context are also important (Cornforth, 2012). If not shared, knowing the history of the school and the context of the relationship gives one or the other cultural, political or social capital that can be used or abused. Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Knyght (2010) note that when there is a power difference between the CEO and the board chair, or when the context changes, tensions and conflicts may arise. Other factors play their part in the relationship. Cornforth and Macmillan (2016, p.19) expand on this when referring to organisations beyond schools:

> "The negotiation of the relationship is influenced by the relative differences in experience, skill, the extent to which each had established a position of authority in the organization, and the will, skill, and time necessary to use these power sources…Establishing mutual trust and respect were also important in developing a successful working relationship; when trust begins to break down, there is a danger the relationship can enter a downward spiral." (Cornforth and Macmillan, 2016, p.19)

Some believe that success in the relationship is down to chemistry, the emotional and psychological interactions:

> "There are two elements to chemistry, analytical interpretative capacity (sense making) and deep friendship (philos). Both emerge as primary to determining Chairman/CEO effectiveness and in combination nurture meaningful knowledge sharing as well as a desire for learning in the boardroom. Absence of either allows for a workable relationship, but with neither, the Chairman/CEO dyad and the organisation are harmed." (Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Knyght, 2010, p.285)

Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Knyght (2010, p.292) go on to suggest that when these are missing, division and even "distaste" may develop which will have a negative effect on the organization and lead to the departure of one or both parties. Trust seems to be a critical factor.  When looking at governance models,

trust is clearly associated with a stewardship model. However, in general, if there is an imbalance of capital whether, cultural, social, political or knowledge, sense-making can be challenging and trust difficult to establish or maintain. Still further, if the capital is abused by the chair or the head of school, a principal agent relationship might develop or strengthen. Various authors (Littleford, 2005; Fisher, 2011; and Hill and James, 2015), emphasize that the success of the relationship between the head of school, the board and the board chair is built on trust. Drawing on the work of various authors, Hill and James (2015) conclude that, in addition to trust, a high level of professional integrity, respect, shared values and personal compatibility will, among other factors, contribute to a good working relationship. Stout (2005, p.17) even states that the board chair "should act as the head's 'best friend'".

However, a good relationship may never be established or, when it is, can deteriorate. Codrington (2014) highlights various reasons for the potential dysfunctionality of the board chair and head of school relationship:

- "An overflow of factional Board politics,
- Unresolved personal or professional conflicts,
- Superficial or too infrequent communication,
- Disagreements over what constitutes ethical conduct,
- Blurring of the governance-management dichotomy,
- Poorly conducted appraisals of the Head by the Board,
- Public undermining of the Head by ill-disciplined Trustees (or ambitious senior staff),
- Simple incompetence on the part of either the Chair or the Head or even,
- Jealousy on the part of Trustees that the Chair-Head relationship has become too close." (Codrington, 2014, p.9)

Not included in Codrington's list is the factor of chemistry highlighted by Kakabadse et al., (2010). This surely cannot be ignored in what is a complex relationship open to various influences. However, the message from the research is clear: the relationship is critical for the success of the school and needs to be nurtured and sustained by both parties. With this being so, one might expect that the health of such a relationship would be an important aspect of quality

management. Stout (2005, p.20) raises concern: “It is disturbing to note the number of accredited schools that continue to lose heads as a result of unresolved governance/management issues, seemingly without any intervention or censure from the accrediting body”. Here, Stout (2005) refers to an organization connected with school quality. So, what is the tenure of heads of school?

## 2.5 Head of school tenure

From my experience, most heads of school are employed by the board on limited term contracts. I understand that these can normally be renewed by mutual agreement. Terms and conditions are likely to allow contracts to be terminated or resignations to be given with appropriate notice. However, terminations and resignations without notice or agreement occur.

As noted in the introduction, only two major pieces of research on the tenure of international school heads appears to have been undertaken. These are by Hawley (1994:1995) and Benson (2011). Hawley’s research, in US-accredited overseas schools, revealed that the average (median) tenure of the 196 chief administrators who responded was 2.8 years, with less than 4% staying seven years or longer. Benson (2011) undertook a similar investigation of chief administrators of international schools who were members of ECIS and/or CIS. Of the 83 chief administrators who participated in the research, the average (median) tenure was 3.7 years. Coincidentally, in research by Fisher (2011), the average tenure of heads in parent elected boards was also found to be 3.7 years, far less, he learned, than in proprietary schools. Benson (2011) found that certain administrator profiles were more likely than others to lead to longer tenure but he did not consider the role of performance management.

Fullan (2007) believes that five years is the minimum time needed for a leader to make a difference in a school and Littleford (2005) considers that:

> “The Head’s impact on the school only begins to occur after years 8-10 when parents, past parents, board members and alumni begin to feel a debt to the current head for the success of their children and the fund raising potential begins to pay off. The years of substantive contribution are often 8-15 and more.” Littleford (2005, para.11)

In the UK, Fidler et al. (2006) report a mean of 6 years for a first headship and 5 years for a second headship in state primary schools and a mean of 6 years for a first headship and 4 years for a second headship in state secondary schools. In the US, Ni et al., 2015 found 4.26 years to be the average for school leaders in typical established public schools while the average for heads in US independent schools is reported to be 5.5 years (NAIS, in Berman, 2003), 6.45 years (Berman, 2003) and 12.3 years (NAIS). Though one should view figures determined in different ways cautiously, the research would suggest that these lengths of service are longer than for heads of international schools.

When a head of school is appointed, it would be expected that the chosen person is considered appropriate to take overall responsibility for the school. In other words, that the appointee will have the requisite skills, aptitude and dispositions to do the job as leader. And yet, the longevity of service of international school heads is relatively short. Is this a sign of less than satisfactory performance, a result of something else or a combination of factors? How does performance management fit into the picture? If schools are concerned about high turnover those responsible for quality should be asking these questions and consider what research indicates.

## 2.6 Quality management

Quality management can be considered on different levels. At the highest level, international schools generally seek legitimacy within a community whether local or global. Suchman (1995) defines legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.” Permission to operate in a country is one form of legitimacy but schools may seek recognition by an international external body, such as the Council of International Schools (CIS), that the school has met certain international standards. In the context of this study, one standard in the 2019 CIS accreditation protocol relates to the relationship between the board and the head of school. There are two criteria:

> “B2i. The relationship between the head of school and the owners and/or governors is a mutually supportive partnership based on a shared vision and common understanding about roles and responsibilities, thus empowering the head of school to provide

leadership and improvement for student learning, well-being, and global citizenship.

B2ii. The working relationship between the school's leaders and the governors and/or owners involves a well-defined appraisal process for both governance and leadership. The effectiveness of working relationships is evaluated and/or reviewed...." (CIS, 2019, p.7)

CIS clearly point to important elements of quality related to the board's work with the head of school: the shared vision, the working relationship and performance management. In England, schools are inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). In their School Inspection Handbook, Ofsted state that inspectors will consider whether governors "performance manage the headteacher rigorously" (Ofsted, 2018, p.39). Performance management of the head of school is thus expected as a part of quality management in England. In the US, only charter-school evaluation and re-authorization protocols are analogous to Ofsted (Berner, 2017).

If the head of school's role is significant, then his or her performance is important. I now look in more detail at the literature on performance management.

## 2.7 Performance management

Performance management, appraisal and evaluation are terms commonly used when considering the measurement or judgement of performance or success. Armstrong and Baron (2005, p14) distinguish, in general terms, between performance management and appraisal. The former, they state, "is a comprehensive, continuous and flexible approach to the management of organisations, teams and individuals that involves the maximum amount of dialogue between those concerned" while the latter is "a more limited approach which involves managers making top down assessments and rating the performance of their subordinates at an annual performance appraisal meeting." Both seem to imply that performance can be defined and measured, that it is something with shape – a reality - and that through a change or continuation of actions over time individuals will reach or get closer to achieving a certain level of performance. What perhaps distinguishes them is that performance management leans more towards

being a continuous process more in line with quality assurance than appraisal which is periodic and more akin to quality control.

Evaluation, however, speaks more explicitly to the measurement of performance. Radnor and Barnes (2007) highlight well the difference between performance measurement and performance management when they state that the former is, “quantifying, either quantitatively or qualitatively, the input, output or level of activity of an event or process” and the latter, which is “action, based on performance measures and reporting, which results in improvements in behaviour, motivation and processes and promotes innovation.” (Radnor and Barnes, 2007). While appraisal and evaluation certainly involve measurement or judgment of performance, they do not necessarily involve management; they can merely be a snapshot of performance. Indeed, they are generally summative in nature. Performance management, on the other hand, indicates a motion for change and measurement thereafter. This is an ongoing process involving assessment of not only what is done but also how it is done. As such it is both formative and summative (Armstrong and Baron, 2005, p15).

### 2.7.1 Purpose of performance management

In the context of organisations, Smith (2009, Foreword) states: “The whole ethos of performance management rests on the assumption that if you can raise the performance levels of individuals, better organisational performance will follow.” This seems to imply a developmental approach. In contrast, in a school setting, Fuller, Hollingworth and Liu (2015) claim that “the overarching purpose of an evaluation is to use defensible criteria to judge the worth or merit of a principal.” With a focus on the attainment of standards this approach indicates a focus on accountability rather than on development.

Since the rise of neo-liberalism, the commodification of education in the 1990s and a general increase in competition, there is a prevailing belief that we can and must define the good and the great through a rational approach (Schwandt, 2005). I would take this to include the work of the head of school. The identification of best practice can be seen in the use of standards and criteria for success. Though

definitions may vary they can be used for judgment independent of context. Schwandt (2005) is greatly concerned about this movement and states:

> "Reducing practice to performance—that is, to the efficient and effective accomplishment of service based on scientific evidence of what works—reflects an exceedingly narrow conception of the kinds of evaluation knowledge, learning, and inquiry relevant to enhancing practice." (Schwandt, 2005)

Putting aside any wider philosophical and political dimensions, which may not always be consciously considered, different reasons for evaluations have been put forward. In their review of the evaluations of principals in 50 US states, Fuller, Hollingworth and Liu (2015) identify six purposes that are shared by at least 20% of all those examined.

1. Improve the skills of individuals
2. Improve student outcomes
3. Provide feedback to the principal
4. Improve teaching and/or instruction
5. Identify effective leaders and/or leaders in all schools are effective
6. Making personnel decisions such as continued employment, salary, and opportunities for advancement. (Fuller, Hollingworth and Liu, 2015)

As these purposes are quite diverse, it implies that evaluation systems have different purposes or that some evaluations have multiple purposes. Spicer et al., (2014) looked at performance management and list what they believe to be four general objectives: development; performance; potential; and rewards. Two main purposes seem to emerge from the lists cited above: professional development and accountability (Matthews, 2002; Kyriakides and Demetriou, 2007). However, if the primary purpose is professional development then performance management would seem to be more appropriate. If the main purpose is accountability, then perhaps a 'simple' evaluation would suffice. Confusion may arise where a single purpose is claimed but dual purposes exist. For example, if the aim of the process is claimed to be professional development but termination of employment follows then clearly accountability is also an aim. Under such circumstances, the honesty and credibility of the process is brought into question. Nonetheless, Sun and Youngs (2009) support a mixed approach, though presumably one that is

transparent. Perhaps it is not a black and white situation but one of balance with performance management leaning towards development and evaluation leaning towards accountability.

### 2.7.2 Approaches to performance management

Different approaches have been driven by underlying beliefs about purpose. Several scholars (Thomas, Holdaway and Ward, 2000; Gaziel, 2008; Goldring et al., 2009a, 2009b) have highlighted the different approaches to evaluation seen over the years in Canada, Israel, and the US. These have been based on job descriptions/role-based, principal efficiency, standards, personal qualities, key behaviours, best practice/processes, results/outcomes, and a subordinate's satisfaction. According to Fuller, Hollingworth and Liu (2015), principal evaluations in the US in the 1960s focused on job tasks or descriptions. This meant checking that the principal was doing the job, as defined. James and Colebourne (2004) mention a rise in management by objectives (MBO) at about the same time in the UK. By the 1980s, evaluations based on competencies, knowledge and skills were considered best practice in the US. (Fuller, Hollingworth and Liu, 2015) This is in turn, note the authors, led to evaluations based on behaviours at the turn of the 21st century. They go on to state that the balance has now shifted towards the outcome of behaviours i.e. students' results. There has also been a change from simple compliance to the setting of independent objectives, a move from input criteria to the monitoring and measurement of outputs. This most recent approach is marked by a high degree of accountability. While professional development may feature as a goal within some performance management systems the literature indicates that this is not the primary focus.

Whether for the purpose of professional development, accountability or both, a clear structure and process for performance management is needed. Carver (2000, p.4) gives clear advice on this:

> "It is crucial that the board not allow caprice and judgments made on unstated criteria to confound the simple relationship between explicit expectations and explicit comparison of data against those expectations." (Carver, 2000, p.4)

When writing of boards in general, Charney (2003, p.2) is sure that "only if the board has clear and explicit criteria in place can it objectively and fairly judge CEO performance." More specifically, in the field of education, Clifford and Ross (2011, p.5) believe that in the US school context the answers to the following questions will indeed lead to a sound evaluation process and structure for principals [heads of school].

- "What are the purposes of the evaluation systems?
- What should be assessed?
- How, if at all, should evaluation be differentiated for elementary, middle-level, and secondary principals?
- How, if at all, should evaluation be differentiated by principals' level of expertise?
- What measures should be used?
- How can evaluation be made feasible, fair, valid, and routine?
- How can evidence of performance be integrated?
- Who should evaluate principals?
- What must principal evaluators know and do, and how can their work be supported?
- How can principal evaluation data best be collected and used?
- What is the best process for states and districts to use when redesigning principal evaluation systems?
- What resources, assistance, or knowledge is beneficial to support principal evaluation system design, and who is best positioned to supply that knowledge?" (Clifford and Ross, 2011, p.5)

These questions allow models suitable for different contexts to be created. Clifford, Hansen and Wraight (2012) offer something similar but are more specific in their guidance on standards and measures. However, goals for the head of school, relating to the individual or a school development plan, could be missed in the design of an evaluation/performance management process in favour of a menu of skills, attributes and standard measures deemed best practice.

Still further, the devil may be in the detail. If one considers the complexity of the head of school's work, the context and the human experience, creating an appropriate evaluation/performance management system may not be simple.

Some authors have highlighted the growing and varied demands on the head of school and thus the difficulties of defining expectations. (Sorenson, 2005; Catano and Stronge, 2007; OECD, 2013; Radinger, 2014). Some suggest conflict:

> "Bombarded with multiple theories of leadership and management, school principals will likely experience a significant amount of role conflict and role overload as they work to fulfil the perceptions of what they are expected to accomplish, and how. Role conflict has the potential to impact a principal's effectiveness. In addition, external forces for improved student outcomes may cause role strain as principals strive to exert greater control of instructional issues while simultaneously working to empower staff through increased shared governance." (Catano and Stronge, 2007)

The idea of performance is complex, note James and Colebourne (2004), a belief also held by Catano and Stronge (2007) who state that "the complexity and lack of clarity surrounding the role of a principal makes the formulation of appropriate performance assessment a daunting task." Perhaps this why Davis et al. (2011) report that they found no more than 28 primary source studies on principal evaluation in the US for the period 1980-2010. Little attention seems to have been given to this topic (Sinnema and Robinson, 2012). So, what are the characteristics of a good process?

### 2.7.3 Characteristics of high-quality evaluation and performance management

Various attempts have been made to identify the characteristics of a good process. (Table 5) While various criteria may be implicit in the work of each group of authors, I have only listed those ideas that were expressed explicitly as important for a good process. I have grouped criteria with perceived similar meanings.

Table 5. Comparative criteria for various evaluation and performance management processes.

| Criteria | Catano and Stronge (2007) | Wallace foundation (2009) | Davis et al. (2011) | Clifford, Hansen and Wraight (2012) | Spicer et al. (2014) | Murphy, Goldring and Porter (2014) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Measure what they are designed to measure. | | √ | | | | |
| Based on research | | | √ | | | |
| Based on clear expectations. | √ | | | | √ | √ |
| Based on goals. | | | √ | | √ | |
| Based on standards. | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Applied consistently and tested for fairness. | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Offer safe and open collaborative environment. | | | | | √ | √ |
| Educative process for professional growth. | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Based on evidence from multiple sources. | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Connected to other systems and plans in district or school. | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Provides actionable feedback. | | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Offers consistent and transparent feedback. | | | | √ | √ | √ |
| Ensures training, support, and evaluation of principal evaluators. | | | | √ | √ | |
| Involves principals [head of school] in design of evaluation model. | | | √ | √ | | √ |
| Connected directly to job descriptions. | | | | | | |
| Includes multiple ratings of performance. | | | | √ | | √ |
| Is adaptable to different contexts. | | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Includes accountability leading to possible rewards and/ or professional development. | | | √ | | √ | √ |

We can see from the comparative data on the characteristics of evaluations that there is agreement on some elements that constitute a good evaluation /performance management system. Among these are: a fair and consistent process; one using multiple sources; the setting of goals by the principal; the use of standards; and the use of multiple sources, are considered important by these authors. It seems that the aim overall is commonly one of support for learning with the caveat that underperformance of a certain level will not be acceptable. Overall, I see these approaches as more in line with performance management than evaluation.

Goals for a head of school can be an important part of performance management systems. The goals can be set by or agreed with the board. They can relate to the head or the school or both. Goals can be contextual and concrete when specific actions are needed or more general and abstract where a behaviour or a skill needs to develop, the result of which may be unspecified. In either case, Sinnema and Robinson (2012) conclude that challenging goals are the key. These, they state, are more likely to yield the best improvements in performance as heads of school are more motivated when the goals stimulate persistence and focus. However, they warn that challenging goals only work when heads have the tools and strategies to attain them. The literature suggests that goal setting is an important element of appraisal or evaluation but especially of performance management. However, goals may not be enough. Perhaps there are skills or attributes that a head of school should always be able to demonstrate and are known to be essential to the role.

Standards can be conceived in two ways, according to Ingvarson et al. (2006). They can be “the articulation of professional principles and values” or they can be “tools that can be used constantly to make judgements about the performance of school leaders.” Standards could be different depending on how they are conceived and used but both should be linked, state Ingvarson et al. (2006)

There has been a gradual move in the US to use externally-benchmarked measures based on ‘universal’ professional principles that are independent of context. These one might expect would be based on research on school leadership as discussed earlier in this literature review. Goldring, Mavrogordato and Haynes (2015) note only a few. They cite the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards; National Board of Professional Teaching

Standards: Standards for Principals; and The National Association of Elementary School Principals' Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do. Of these, the first is commonly cited in the US. The ISLLC national standards were first formulated in 1996. In 2008, they were updated and then, in 2015, overhauled significantly in the light of educational research. Now adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) and renamed the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), the 2015 Standards are more granular and said to,

> "'model' professional standards in that they communicate expectations to practitioners, supporting institutions, professional associations, policy makers and the public about the work, qualities and values of effective educational leaders. They are a compass that guides the direction of practice directly as well as indirectly through the work of policy makers, professional associations and supporting institutions. They do not prescribe specific actions, encouraging those involved in educational leadership and its development to adapt their application to be most effective in particular circumstances and contexts." (NPBEA, 2015)

These satisfy Ingvarson's first definition of standards. Since then, they have been used in the design of evaluation systems. One of these, the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (Val-Ed) funded by The Wallace Foundation, reflects Ingvarson's second definition. As mentioned, it seems logical that the standards used to evaluate leaders would be based on research into leadership, the qualities of leaders, the work of leaders and how they might positively impact the organisation and more specifically student learning. In the UK, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) first introduced the National Standards for Headteachers in 1998. The 2015 National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers, published by the Department for Education (DfE, 2015), do not refer to research but state that: "These standards are designed to inspire public confidence in headteachers, raise aspirations, secure high academic standards in the nation's schools, and empower the teaching profession." The standards, an update from 2004, are "intended as guidance to underpin best practice, whatever the particular job description of the headteacher." These standards are essentially in line with Ingvarson's first definition though there are hints of the second.

In table 6, NPBEA and DfE standards are compared.

Table 6. Comparative criteria between NPBEA and DfE standards (NPBEA, 2015; DfE, 2015)

| Criteria | Professional standards for educational leaders (NPBEA, 2015) | National standards of excellence (DfE 2015)* |
|---|---|---|
| General leadership (e.g. leadership vision, values, ideals) | √ | √ |
| Pedagogical leadership (e.g. leading teaching and learning, setting learning objectives, curriculum development) | √ | √ |
| Organisation development (e.g. strategic planning, professional development) | √ | √ |
| School climate (e.g. dealing with diversity, school violence and bullying) | √ | √ |
| Community relations (e.g. work with families, communities, external partners) | √ | √ |
| Evaluation and accountability (e.g. skills for school self-evaluation, teacher appraisal, student assessment) | | √ |
| Professional capacity of school personnel | √ | √ |
| Resource management (e.g. administration of buildings, financial and human resources, administration, time resources) | √ | √ |
| Interpersonal skills (e.g. communication, interaction, conflict management, professional dialogue). | √ | √ |
| Ethics and professional norms | √ | √ |
| Equity and cultural responsiveness | √ | √ |
| Personal qualities (e.g. knowledge, optimism, integrity, creativity, resilience, inspiration, entrepreneurship, innovation) | | √ |

*The National standards of excellence are organised under four domains: qualities and knowledge; pupils and staff; systems and process; and the self-improving school. Standards within each are listed. These have been grouped with the criteria above.

Both sets of standards are similar and would seem to be suitable for the purpose of defining principles and values as well as for use in an evaluation tool. However, their suitability to the local context of international schools would need to be reviewed. The literature review did not reveal any standards designed for international schools.

Having considered theoretical elements of appraisals, evaluations or performance management, I now review their use in practice.

### 2.7.4 Performance management and evaluation in practice

In the US, Condon and Clifford (2010) found only eight scholarly articles relating specifically to the structure of evaluations. Only two of these were from this century – Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and VAL-ED. The first of these, developed by Kouzes and Posner (2002), is based on five domains: modeling the way; inspiring a shared vision; challenging the process; enabling others to act; and encouraging the heart. The model includes self-reporting and multi-source input sometimes referred to as a 360° format. The second, according to Porter et al. (2006), is also a multi-source tool that looks at key leadership processes of heads of school (planning, implementation, supporting, advocating, communicating and monitoring) in six 'core components' of the school: high standards for student learning; rigorous curriculum (content); quality instruction (pedagogy); culture of learning & professional behavior, connections to external communities and performance accountability. The process for the evaluation of performance is norm-referenced against other principals and criterion-referenced against standards. I can add to this the work of Marshall (2011) whose rubrics for evaluation comprise the following: diagnosis and planning; priority management and communication; curriculum and data; supervision, evaluation, and professional development; discipline and family involvement; and management and external relations.

The administration of evaluation and performance management systems varies. In the case of US public schools, Goldring, Mavrogordato and Haynes (2015) note that the evaluation of principals is generally undertaken by the superintendent who is responsible for a district. In US and UK independent schools, it is the board who are expected to undertake evaluation. (Moredock, 2003; Independent Association of Preparatory Schools, 2016). In the former there are no rules for schools though

there are expectations associated with membership of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) and accreditation organisations such as the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

In the UK, the Independent Association of Preparatory Schools (IAPS) broadly recommends that schools follow a process similar to state schools outlined below. Though they recognize that schools may choose their own processes, they do outline their recommendations that include having clear procedures for a 360º process which takes into account the head of school's personal and professional goals as well as school needs (Independent Association of Preparatory Schools, 2016).

In the UK, the state system in England introduced a performance management scheme in 2000 that requires governors to establish an effective performance management policy and to undertake head of school appraisal with the support of an external adviser (EA). Governors must choose at least two governors plus an EA to undertake the work. They must inform the head of school of the standards to be used and set annual objectives. At the end of the year the head of school is held accountable for the results. He or she carries out a general self-review, provides data to the committee and discusses the objectives that were set at the start of the year. The committee will appraise performance of both and write a report with actions. The purpose of the system is to support professional development and make recommendations on pay. Concerns about the process are common (Kerry, 2005, Fellows, 2018). The overall benefits, the needed time commitment and the ability of lay governors to do the work, were all raised. In the case of the latter, training was introduced three years after implementation of the process. Ofsted (2013) reinforce the need for this when they state that the performance management of the head of school is weak if the governors do not know enough about the school or engage in effective activities. They warn boards against excessive trust in the head teacher, friendship and subservience. This seems to reflect that Ofsted has an agency theory perspective.

The literature on research in north America suggests that principals view evaluation as perfunctory (Portin, Feldman and Knapp, 2006) and believe that performance is inconsistently measured (Thomas, Holdaway and Ward, 2000). Still further, some researchers hold that evaluations are viewed as simplistic, may not align with appropriate standards and rarely display rigour (Davis et al., 2011;

Goldring et al., 2009a; 2009b; Portin et al., 2006). This suggests that processes are poor. Other weaknesses were found. In their analysis of 100 evaluation instruments from 97 school districts in Virginia, Catano and Stronge (2007) see inconsistencies and recommend greater alignment with ISLLC standards. However, Kimball et al. (2009) found a mixed picture of the benefits of standards-based evaluations on principal performance.

On evaluation, Portin, Feldman and Knapp (2006) observe that:

> "The purpose of the activity has generally been summative: to assert and maintain some accountability for the leaders' work; to justify hiring, firing, reassignment; or to inform the renewal of an administrative contract." (Portin, Feldman and Knapp, 2006, p.2)

In their analysis of assessments in 44 districts of Delaware, The Wallace Foundation (2009, p.2) found that "nearly half fail to give leaders clear feedback on what they could be doing more or better to improve teaching and learning." Indeed, Goldring, Mavrogordato and Haynes (2015, p.575) observe that "until recently, evaluation and feedback for principals has rarely focused on matters of teaching and learning. The Wallace Foundation (2009) note that principal evaluations are generally tied to personal goals with only 25% connected to ISLLC standards. Goldring et al. (2009a, p.25) draw a slightly different conclusion and assert that "the content of leadership assessment is 'a mile wide and an inch deep'; many aspects of leadership are assessed, but almost nothing is assessed in depth." However, when principals receive feedback, it may not always lead to change. Kimball et al. (2009, p.234) claim that "unfortunately, there is also little research on whether the use of these leadership standards for any purpose affects principal practice or school performance." This brings in to question why this should be.

Alicke & Sedikides (2009) bring to light the human tendency for self enhancement and protection that explains how we might process feedback favourably. Our ability to benefit from feedback is likely to depend on the delivery and content of the feedback (Goldring, Mavrogordato and Haynes, 2015). Cannon & Witherspoon (2005) outline well some of the ways in which the message – feedback - is made more difficult to accept. Goldring, Mavrogordato and Haynes (2015, p.592) note

that “merely providing principals feedback, particularly feedback that conflicts with principals’ self-perceptions, and expecting them to manage their own cognitive dissonance may be unrealistic and counterproductive.” So, when principals are given feedback, they may reject the ideas or not know how to design goals, actions, or a process to address them that would lead to success. Fuller et al. (2015), do not include these possibilities in their findings from the literature on why evaluations fall short. They list the following: principals view evaluations as relatively superficial and provide little feedback; there is a paucity of evidence that evaluations improve practice; inconsistency in evaluation administration is common; many evaluations not aligned to national standards; weak evidence on how evaluations allow inferences on effectiveness; purposes are often mixed; and there is variance in approach and content across districts and states. The research above suggests that there is much to be done to improve the situation of performance management in the US.

In a study on performance management in the UK, Spicer et al. (2014, p.9) found that there was a “lack of, and need for, systematic guidance and support around the effective management of headteachers’ performance.” They highlight how headteacher performance management is made more challenging because of an increase in the responsibilities of boards, changing board structures and a scarcity of resources to support development. Interestingly, Spicer et al. (2014) found that governors are much more likely to judge the performance management process fit for purpose than were headteachers, (approx. 88% against approx. 59%). When asked, “What single change would most improve the quality of headteacher appraisal in your school?” (Spicer, et al., 2014, p.72), governors cited: good external advisers, more time, better data, a trained independent external advisor, rigour yet tailored, flexibility on pay and to move responsibility to others such as inspectors. However, a “very strong message” from the research of Spicer et al. (2014, p.56) is that “effective headteacher performance management depends on mutual respect and trust in the relationship between the governing body and the headteacher”. How such trust could be developed is an important question for governors and heads of school.

The boards of international schools in this study are not required to follow any system of evaluation or performance management for heads of school. Broad guidelines on head of school appraisal have been offered by Bowley (2001) and

Matthews (2002) but evidence that this or any other model is widely accepted was not found. It seems that there is great diversity in the ways that heads of school are evaluated, if indeed they are.

## 2.8 Summary of the literature review

There are different forms of international school. In this study, it is those defined by Hayden and Thompson (2013) as offering a curriculum that is not of the host country and by Bunnell, Fertig and James (2016), as having an international outlook or values and that are not-for-profit provide the context for this study. The governing body of many not-for-profit international schools is a board; it is usually responsible for overseeing the proper conduct of a school and its success. The board may comprise members who are elected, self-perpetuating or both. Boards of the latter type are known as hybrid boards and the literature suggests that there are more of these than formally when parent boards were common. The structure and role of the board may be defined by the school, but the functioning is generally within the control of the members. They may operate in different ways influenced by the underlying philosophical positions of members. The board is generally accountable to the school community yet there is not much training available for board members. Literature around board functioning and good practice is evident in the literature. The literature also reveals that board member turnover in international schools is often high. Nonetheless, boards are responsible for hiring the head of school, an important task considering the leading role that heads of school play. Much is written about the characteristics of leadership in general as well as within schools. As international schools are often run as independent businesses, even if they are not -for-profit organisations, the head of school is not only responsible for the academic success and well-being of the students but also for a wide range of other tasks related to being the effective CEO. Nonetheless, heads of school are generally not required to have any special professional qualifications beyond academic qualifications related to education. The board's chosen approach to hiring a head of school and working with him or her is usually self-determined. There seems to be a common approach to hiring yet very different approaches to the relationship with the head. One might conclude from the literature that there are some potential weaknesses in the stability of board membership, board member training, the qualifications of heads and, possibly, the process of finding a suitable head of school. The relationship between the board and the head of school can be shaped by the theoretical model of governance

employed by the board as well as the board's structure and functioning. However, trust appears to be a key element for an effective working relationship, along with professionalism, respect, shared values and personal compatibility. An agreement between the board and the head of school on respective roles and responsibilities; general expectations including attributes; and communication protocols, would also seem to be important though little mentioned in the literature.

Professional communication with the head of school in the form of appraisal, evaluation or performance management systems can be used by the board for the development of the head of school, for the purpose of accountability, or both. The review showed the latter to be a common aim. When present, the structure of the process may include a framework for setting annual goals, using standards or both. While there seems to be more agreement in the UK on the purpose of performance management, it seems that this, along with appraisal and evaluation, vary in the US despite a slow move towards common ideas being shared across states. Where performance management or evaluation processes exist, there seems little support for them and little belief that they have an impact on the key elements of school leadership. There appears to be no peer-reviewed research on the performance management of heads of international schools.

Many international school boards are accountable to the parents. However, some have chosen to undergo an accreditation process which has led to external validation of a school's quality. It has also led to a degree of standardization among schools. Nonetheless, on the matter of the head of school's performance management, each school board can decide what it believes to be appropriate.

The most recent literature suggests that the period of employment – tenure – for heads of international schools is on average (median) 3.7 years (Benson, 2011). Possible reasons are explored though the role of performance management, as professional communication between the board and the head of school, is not discussed. Could performance management play a role?

In the light of this literature review and my personal desire to open interest in what I believe to be a potentially critical element in the success of an international school my study focuses on performance management and whether it plays a part in the tenure of heads of not-for-profit international schools.

## Chapter 3: Research methodology

### 3.1 The approach to empirical work

When considering my research, the thoughts of Yates (2004) are instructive:

> "good research needs to be technically good (to have methodological integrity or logic), to be making a contribution to knowledge (to be something distinct from public relations or propaganda), and to be doing something that matters (to be framing questions that contribute to better and fairer education experiences, outcomes, social arrangements rather than punitive, deficit-oriented, anachronistic ones)." (Yates 2004, p.212)

I aimed to ensure that my research is in line with the above. In this section, my goal is to ensure that my study is technically good.

### 3.2 Theory – Ontology, epistemology and methodology

Scholars approach research with known or unknown factors influencing their decisions. These have philosophical underpinnings that need to be explored and considered carefully to ensure that the research will be valid and trustworthy. As Scott and Usher (2011, p.10) put it: "Philosophical issues constitute what researchers silently think about research… (so) cannot be ignored until after the event." Burrell and Morgan (1979) summarise well the philosophical dimensions that they believe underlie the approaches researchers may take. They consider two dimensions. The first is termed the Subjective-Objective dimension and relates to how we view social science. Explicit or implicit assumptions relating to ontology, epistemology and human nature will all influence a methodological approach. The second dimension is how researchers view society; this they call the Regulation and Radical Change dimension. When considered together, Burrell and Morgan (1979, p.22) claim that we have framework to understand what influences us. See Figure 1.

On the Subjective-Objective dimension the assumptions lead to different research methodologies that can be described as ideographic, where specificity and uniqueness is the focus, or nomothetic, where general laws are sought. (Table 7)

The second dimension, Radical Change - Regulation, defines the contrast between the former, those looking for change, contradictions and conflict in the present and who believe in changing the future, with the latter, those who focus on the needs of the present and who seek value order, consensus and status quo.
Figure 1. Four paradigms for the analysis of social theory (Burrell and Morgan 1979, p.22)

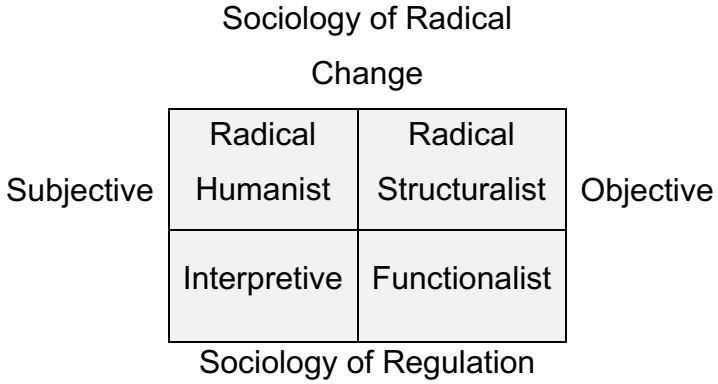


Table 7. A scheme for analysing assumptions about the nature of social science (Adapted from Burrell and Morgan 1979, p.3)

| Radical Humanist and Interpretive | <Paradigms> | Radical Structuralist and Functionalist |
|---|---|---|
| Subjectivist | <Approach> | Objectivist |
| Nominalism | < Ontology > | Realism |
| Anti-positivism | < Epistemology > | Positivism |
| Volunteerism | < Human nature > | Determinism |
| Ideographic | < Methodology > | Nomothetic |

I see an important question. Can one ontological position offer a complete picture in a research enquiry?

Considering first the subjectivist view, Putnam (1981) believed that the human world cannot be reduced to a set of universal laws. Putnam considered the world to be fluid where individuals, all of whom are unique, interact with it to create their own reality. Spencer et al. (2003, p.3) state that research "aims to provide an in-depth understanding of people's experiences, perspectives and histories in the context of their personal circumstances or settings". As such, they point to the need to design inquiries that allow stories to emerge. Complex thick descriptive

narrative is essential in order to gain understanding and deep insight into, for example, motive or belief. Empathy is needed as is reflexivity, an understanding of how one can influence the social context and be influenced by the situation and circumstances. This can affect our research design, including our definitions, chosen methods, behaviour, the recording of and interpretation of the data. The subjectivist approach is used to generalise from the specific and paint broader pictures by induction. However, Taylor (2015) notes that if every research moment and situation is considered unique, thus discrete, understanding from research would only be valid in one set of circumstances. Even when multiple similar studies are planned and undertaken each study would be different as full control of variables in many in vivo situations is not possible.

Turning to the objectivist view, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) outline the tenets of the so-called scientific approach. Four main ideas underpin this perspective. The first of these is determinism, a belief that the world is ordered such that cause and effect can be revealed. The second is empiricism where true knowledge is based on verifiable evidence involving quantitative methods. Through objective repeated experimentation in a value neutral and controlled environment data is analysed and classified to uncover relationships and approximations of the truth. Parsimony is the third tenet where phenomena should be explained in the simplest form. The fourth principle is that of generality where laws are derived by inductive or deductive reasoning. Some are concerned by the perceived limitations of this approach. Hammersley (2002, p.38) declares it redundant and that a “commitment to the goal of discovering laws is now widely regarded as an error deriving from a discredited positivist philosophy.” Others, such as Habermas (2005), warn of a blinkered philosophical vision of scientism and that this approach has been raised to the level of a religion in secular society. Nearly one hundred years ago, Wittgenstein (1922, p.89) noted sagely that “even if all possible scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all.” I suggest that those who object to the pre-eminence of positivism might claim that, in effect, it is detached from reality. Conversely, those who value a positivist approach might argue that anti-positivists ignore clear signs of general pictures, trends or realities.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.21) summarize the weaknesses of the two fundamental ontological paradigms: “Just as positivistic theories can be criticized

for their macro-sociological persuasion, so interpretive and qualitative models can be criticized for their narrowly micro-sociological perspectives." This leads me to conclude that there are different ways to explore reality, each of which will be found or will emerge in different ways.

Denzin (2010, p.424) holds this position, stating that "there are no ironclad criteria regulating the production of knowledge or the validation of inquiry findings." When undertaking research, I believe one needs to begin by considering the nature of the inquiry and what is being sought. Some will start with an ontological position and then develop a methodology. Others may believe that the methodology is more important than the philosophy so would choose a perceived good design as a cognitive first step where the goals of the research and its context are the starting point. As Denzin (2010, p.421) points out:

> "A dialectic, of sorts, seems to operate ying and yang, a merger of binaries, opposite sides of the same coin, paradigms and methods: Side 1, paradigm discourse drives methodology, and Side 2, methodological models drive paradigm discourse. In between the two extremes there is an excluded middle, the space of politics and moral discourse." (Denzin, 2010, p.421)

I support Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p.15) who claim that those undertaking research should be allowed to "mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions." They refer to this as Contingency Theory. Denscombe (2008, p274) is concerned that this pragmatic approach can be misunderstood so stresses the term is philosophical and does not imply a "lack of principles". He concedes that this third paradigm consists of "variations and inconsistencies" but believes these should not be thought of as "alien to the concept of paradigm nor in some sense a unique weakness of the mixed methods paradigm." (Denscombe, 2008, p280).

Using different methodological approaches within the same research inquiry is termed mixed methods. The essential ideas related to mixed methods have been defined by Burke Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007). These include the following: mixing of quantitative and qualitative methodologies; point(s) where mixing occurs; breadth (degree) of mixing at each stage; purpose for mixing; and

orientation, whether top down, a political driver or bottom up, a research question driver. Denzin (2010, p.420) notes that, “mixed methods discourse introduces and validates a postpositivist language....[this language] says anyone can use any method, for methods are merely tools, not forms of performative, interpretive practice.” However, while generally supporting this approach, he signals that such language can become procedural and that the emergent aspect of critical inquiry can be lost.

In recent years, a variety of mixed methods approaches have been discussed and classified by authors. (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Burke Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007; Denscombe, 2008; Denzin, 2010; Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Morgan, 2007; and Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2006). Their perspectives have informed my thinking:

I have chosen both an Interpretive paradigm and a Functionalist paradigm as I concluded that I needed to understand the complexity of the situation that heads of school find themselves in yet also understand how a large number feel about certain aspects of performance management. The first goal is best achieved by giving heads of school a voice and letting them talk about performance management in their own words and so a qualitative approach seems more appropriate.  I begin with semi-structured interviews of ten heads of not-for -profit international schools who offered to participate. The second goal builds on the understanding of the data from the qualitative study to ask questions of other heads of school about performance management. This is done through a questionnaire distributed to 84 heads of school from within the same field of heads of not-for-profit international schools who expressed interest in the research. I discuss this in more detail later.

When it comes to research design, and more particularly the analysis of different forms of data, Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) see parallel criteria between the rigour of an objectivist approach and the reliability or trustworthiness of a subjectivist approach (Table 8). However, in connection with these parallel criteria, Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007) note that,

> “there can be little doubt that they represent a substantial advance in thinking about the rigor issue. Nevertheless, there are some major difficulties with them that call out for their augmentation with new criteria rooted in naturalism rather than simply paralleling those rooted in positivism.” (Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007, p19)

The authors claim that beyond the parallel criteria, there are specific criteria for an anti-positivist paradigm that collectively relate to what they refer to as authenticity. They include criteria of fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity. These will be considered in my data analysis

Table 8. Parallel criteria between objectivist rigour and subjectivist reliability. (After Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007)

| **Objectivist Rigour – the thoroughness, precision and accuracy of the research.** | **Subjectivist Reliability or Trustworthiness.** |
|---|---|
| Truth Value – the internal validity or the extent to which conclusions on cause can be drawn from research. | Credibility, as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis and member checks. |
| Applicability – the external validity or the degree to which findings can apply to other situations. | Transferability, where thick descriptive narratives are used to determine similarity or applicability to other situations. |
| Consistency – the reliability of measures. | Dependability - using external audits to look at process for reliability and replicability. |
| Objectivity - where care is taken not to “interfere” with the context of the study. | Neutrality - care taken not to “interfere” with the context of the study. Confirmability – using external audits to look at products. |

## 3.3 Research challenge

I sought answers to four questions in this research:

1. How are heads of not-for-profit international schools prepared for their work?

2. How is performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools conceived, structured and organized?
3. How do heads of not-for-profit international schools perceive their performance management processes?
4. Does performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools appear to be linked to tenure?

### 3.3.1 Sampling and limitations

Having defined the field for my potential sample as heads of school who were able to report on their experience of one completed headship in a not-for-profit international school that might be classified by Hayden and Thompson (2013) and (Bunnell, Fertig and James, 2016) as having an international outlook or values and that offer an international programme, I wanted to ensure that as many as possible participated. I knew from experience as a member that many within this field, perhaps 250, were also members of the Academy of International School Heads (AISH), the majority being North American or UK nationals. AISH is a voluntary membership organisation that aims to provide support to heads of school by offering a forum for sharing experiences, concerns, questions and data. I chose to approach AISH and so I made a call for participation in Phase 1 of the study on performance management through the member email servlist. I outlined my research and asked those interested in being interviewed to contact me. (Appendix 1) Thereafter, those expressing interest were contacted by email individually. As Hewson et al. (2003, p.5) note: “Posting a participation call to newsgroups or contacting individuals via their email boxes gives the researcher more control over the nature of the sample obtained.” In this case, the group was defined but the sample to be taken from the group was only controlled to the extent that all participants should have completed one cycle of headship in a not-for-profit international school. The volunteer participants were taken from the closed field of international school heads who were members of AISH. In Phase 1, data from ten heads interviewed was captured and analyzed. The participant profiles were as follows. Participant 1: German male; Participant 2: Canadian male; Participant 3: American female; Participant 4: Canadian male; Participant 5: American male; Participant 6: British male; Participant 7: American male; Participant 8: American male; Participant 9: American female; and Participant 10: American male. I conducted the interviews online using SKYPE in the hope that

important ideas and perspectives on performance management would arise that could be used to inform my questionnaire in Phase 2.

After Phase 1, I sent a second e-mailing via the AISH member servlist with a link to my questionnaire for those who wished to participate in Phase 2. The questionnaire was created and distributed using the online survey app, Survey Monkey. It was intended that this sample would be independent of that in Phase 1 and larger. I was able to include 84 respondents initially. More detailed information follows later.

### 3.3.2 Ethics

Scholars in the UK may turn to The British Educational Research Association (BERA) for guidance, particularly with regards to ethics. The organization states that all research should be undertaken "within an ethic of respect for: the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom." (BERA, 2011, p.4) This, BERA (2011, p.5) says, will include "responsibilities to: participants; sponsors of research; the community of educational researchers; and educational professionals, policy makers and the general public."

Stutchbury and Fox (2009) believe that all research that involves people interacting with other people will have an ethical dimension. Apart from laws to follow, the authors point out that "maintaining the integrity of the research is itself an ethical issue." (Stutchbury and Fox, 2009, p.489) They highlight the work of Flinders (1992, cited in Stutchbury and Fox, 2009) and Seedhouse (1998, cited in Stutchbury and Fox, 2009) who provide useful frameworks for thinking about the ethical issues "within a moral framework" (p.490) that often pits a deontological position of duty and doing what is considered right with a utilitarian position of determining benefit and what will bring the greatest good. Blending the ideas of each model, Stutchbury and Fox (2009) offer 24 practical questions within four different layers: external/ecological, consequential/utilitarian, deontological and relational/individual, that they believe are helpful to researchers. The authors claim that these cover BERA's 48 "shoulds" (BERA, 2004) but go further in considering the "consequences of the research and methodological issues." Their approach seems more comprehensive than the BERA guidelines and, by using questions to guide a researcher, make it easier than interpreting the guidelines of BERA.

I considered the following in my research. Within the layer of external/ecological considerations, I first reflected upon awareness. Brooks, te Riele and Maguire (2014) state that the choice of a research topic is never a neutral act and that many of the questions that education researchers focus on are deeply ideological in nature. This prompted me to think about the potential deeper ethical issues of what might seem on the surface to be an impartial piece of research. I considered whether external influences, forms of capital or power relations might be impacting the design of the research, the collection of data and indeed the analysis. As a former head of school, whose interest in the topic was fuelled by experience, I was conscious of the need to control potential confirmation bias. However, I perceived no imbalance of power between the participants and me that might steer responses. In summary, I felt that there were no external ethical pressures.

Cultural Sensitivity also falls into this layer. Though the participants are situated in different cultures, I do not believe that there needed to be any accommodation for the variance in their locations or their nationalities; all the participants play a similar role within similar schools. They are working in multicultural environments and accustomed to different perspectives. I also considered the questions and concluded from my experience that they were not culturally sensitive.

No known government or legal issues were associated with this research. There was no sponsorship involved in the research nor any incentives for participation. Children, vulnerable young people and vulnerable adults were not involved in this research nor were animals.

Considering the second layer, consequential factors, I looked at the potential benefits to those participating and to me. The findings of the research could benefit heads of school directly and indirectly. By knowing the findings they might consider their practice and that of the board with respect to performance management. This in turn could be beneficial to the school and the students. Looking at potentially negative aspects of the research, I first considered whether I would benefit at the expense of others and concluded that I would not. For participants, I thought about possible tangential effects. As the research involved questions about the relationship between the head of school and the board, there would be a potential impact if participant data were known to the board. However,

participant data was historic and anonymous, so this risk was minimal. With regards to detriment arising from participation in research, there were no foreseeable risks or negative outcomes for participants in the study. Questions were unlikely to cause discomfort to participants.

In the third ethical layer, I considered the deontological aspects. Here I assessed whether the actions in themselves are ethically sound, independent of the reason for or consequences of any actions. In all aspects of the research, my approach was designed to be open, fair and honest. I aimed to treat all participants similarly. I looked at the openness in the information provided to participants and the degree of disclosure relating to the research. I explained the purpose and procedures of the research to participants in my request for participants and in the documentation on the research distributed to participants before collecting any data. I explained that it is part of my EdD thesis; why it would be of interest to the participant and international school administration; and how it might add to the greater body of knowledge. The specific research method was explained to participants and they were informed that they could ask questions about it.

When it comes to the fourth layer, relational/individual issues, I felt that I had voluntary informed consent: I asked participants if they wished to be included in the interviews to sign a consent form. This was only done after all the relevant information had been given to them. The length of time that data would be kept, the use of data and access to data are governed by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). With regards to privacy, I trust that all rights and obligations to confidentiality and non-disclosure of the research were respected. I stated how the data would be collected and anonymized by giving each participant a number and kept private on a password protected site or in secure private storage. Further, I made clear how the results might be used in future.  Last, I stated the participants' right to withdraw. Participants were told they had the right to voluntarily withdraw and rejoin the research project. They were also informed that with regards to access to results they could request a summary of findings and/or the results after the thesis is published.

Brooks, te Riele and Maguire (2014) note that, through reflexivity and sensitivity, there is always a possibility that new ethical issues will arise during the research that will have to be addressed. A consent form was signed by those participating in

the interviews as their identity was known. For those completing the questionnaire, each was assigned a number when they completed it. I do not know who participated other than they were an AISH member. However, they too were given information on the measures being taken to protect the data when the questionnaire link was made available on the AISH servlist.

## 3.4 Methods

As mentioned, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) summarise the weaknesses of two fundamental ontological paradigms. Conversely, I see that each paradigm has its strengths and can help reveal truths. With a subjectivist approach, I can gain a deep understanding of experience while with an objectivist approach, I can seek patterns from a larger sample. For this reason, I have taken an approach characterized as pragmatism and chosen a mixed methods approach.

Two sequential mixed methods models seemed appropriate for my inquiry. In the first, I would begin with an objectivist approach, generally characterized as a quantitative method, and follow with a subjectivist approach in the form of a qualitative method while in the second model I would switch the approaches and methods. In either case, data from the first would inform the second. If I was to start by using a quantitative method, such as a questionnaire to gather data on areas of interest to heads, I could use this information to ask more searching questions in a qualitative method such as an interview. This model might not be as effective as the second model in bringing important themes to the fore. I wanted to understand the perspectives of heads of school first. In conversation, I predicted, important themes would be given opportunity to emerge which I believe would be less likely to happen in questionnaires where exploration of ideas is more difficult, even if the questionnaire allows for open-ended responses. Therefore, I chose the second model, a qualitative method in Phase 1 of my research and a quantitative method in phase 2. The personal experiences of heads of school were elicited in Phase 1 through semi-structured interviews, based around the four research questions. The themes and sub themes identified were used, along with findings from the literature and my own thoughts, in Phase 2, the quantitative part of my research - a questionnaire.

### 3.4.1 Phase 1 – Design and data collection method

Interviews were chosen for this phase for two reasons. First, I could not assume that my understanding of the research topic was complete so I needed to hear in in the words of the heads of school what they recalled and understood from their experience., This was important in itself but the data also helped inform the design of the quantitative aspect of my research, a questionnaire. In using the interview data, the content of the questionnaire should be relevant to heads of school and thus help elicit relevant data. Second, I felt that an interview offered greater opportunity for the expression of ideas than solely using a questionnaire. A questionnaire has its strengths but if used alone, can lead to questions from participants going unanswered and important detail about the participants' experience not being captured by the limitation of questions. Questionnaires allow participants more time to think about their responses, but do not offer the opportunity for interaction and therefore no opportunity to create a rich narrative reflecting the reality of the participants' experience.

When considering the nature of the interviews, I reflected on the distinction between phenomenological interviews that aim to build rich descriptions of specific lived experiences and ethnographic interviews that focus on drawing cultural pictures through the meanings that people ascribe to their experiences, expressed in their own words (Spradley, 1979). Holloway and Todres (2003, p.355) eased my concerns about such differences.

> "Precise definitions of specific qualitative approaches are still not settled and boundaries often blurred. We do not wish to advocate exclusivity or an elitist approach, nor do we see pragmatism as a 'methodological crime'." (Holloway and Todres, 2003, p.355)

My interviews leant more towards a phenomenological approach as I wanted to focus on specific experiences. Phenomenology, state Hopkins, Regehr and Pratt (2017, p21), is "a commitment to experience in the service of evoking meaning". The authors point to three important tensions that need to be recognized when undertaking phenomenological research. All focus on the positionality of the researcher, that is the "stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study — the community, the organization or the

participant group." (Rowe, 2014, p2). In other words, we need to consider carefully who we are; how we think and act; what we know, believe and speak; and the potential effect of each in relation to the participants when planning the study, undertaking the research and analyzing the data.

According to Hopkins, Regehr and Pratt (2017), there are three tensions to consider. The first of these is that between the general and the particular. The authors claim we need to move "back and forth between considering each story on its own and the collective emergent understanding" (Hopkins, Regehr and Pratt, 2017, p22) so as not to miss one or other perspective. In the second tension, is that of phenomenological attitude, which Finlay (2008, p29) states, is the balance between reduction, or trying to leave pre-conceived ideas behind and taking an objective stance of "empathetic openness to the world", and using pre-conceived ideas that can contribute to greater understanding in a controlled manner. The third tension concerns description and interpretation and the need to move between the two if we are to record the encounter and give meaning to it. In summary, Hopkins, Regehr and Pratt (2017, p2 3) characterise the researcher's role as a dance between the two poles of each tension and liken this to the concept of a hermeneutic circle. For my semi-structured interviews, I employed a Socratic-Hermeneutic approach as outlined by Dinkins (2005, p.3). Dinkins sees the researcher and participant as "co-inquirers" in a dialogue catalyzed by questions and answers. This contrasts with an interviewer who aims to act as a 'neutral' and who facilitates, records and codes responses to predetermined questions. The latter approach is perhaps influenced by thinking characterized by Gadamer (2004) who believes that our prejudices and habits of mind influence our thinking and therefore our behaviour and questions so, when planning and conducting an interview, we should let the participants' experiences unfold in their own words. While this has its strength, it is limited by the questions which are exclusively shaped by the researcher and by could limit the breadth and depth of response as well as the language and expression of the participant. The Socratic-Hermeneutic approach is based on the notion of evolving understanding and exploration based on reflection. It comes from the interplay between a researcher who may be conceiving themes and a participant whose specific experiences may exist in isolation. The exchange of questions and responses may help the researcher get a clearer understanding of what the participant intends to convey and a sense of his or her beliefs and values. This contemporary view of the *active*

*interview* is explained well by Holstein and Gubrium (1995) who support this approach:

> "Meaning is not elicited merely by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge—treasuries of information awaiting excavation, so to speak—as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers." (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p.3)

One of the potential shortfalls of this approach, from a consistency perspective, is the changing position of the interviewer during and after an interview. Our interactions change us and so while each new interview has something in common with the last, it is also different (Nunkoosing, 2005). It seems that this cannot be avoided though awareness may limit its effect. Alternatives to the active interview include, as mentioned, the unstructured approach where one merely asks an open question such as "let's talk about your school" to a heavily guided approach at the other end of the spectrum, that is characterized by simple closed questions such as, "What was the system of performance management in your school?" (Morse, 2014) In either case, simply listening to the participant with minimum interference is expected. This may elicit emic data that comes to the mind of the participants but other related ideas may be missed. Equally, the data may not be as rich as in active interviews that are characterized by interaction, exploration and reflection.

In my research I tried to strike a balance between guiding the heads of school to respond to certain questions in order to collect related data from each participant and being flexible to allow free thinking. The semi-structured interviews have an etic dimension in that I ask questions I judge to be important. However, my aim was to explore areas of interest to the participants through active dialogue and so remain open to responses that could appear tangential or even irrelevant, acknowledging that they may be important and could enhance my understanding. I was open to the possibility that other questions could arise that would generate reflection, further discussion and clarity such that emic, or important knowledge to the participants, could emerge.

I chose to use a commercial voice over internet protocol (VOIP) service SKYPE for three reasons. First, the participants are working in different parts of the world so face to face meetings are not practical. Second, the use of a VOIP service, as opposed to a phone call, can allow for aural and visual contact during interview. This means that body language can also be seen during interview which can sometimes help understanding. Third, it easily allows for the recording of interviews.

I undertook a pilot interview to test my design. Van Teijlingen et al. (2001) highlight the importance of this stage in research and how, the pilot study is not only useful in helping design but in the discussion of the research topic in general. In this pilot, I wanted to see how the documentation about the research that would be sent to AISH members would be understood and received. I also wanted to get feedback on the questions, their structure and their meaning. I wanted to get a sense of how the interview questions would be answered. Did they elicit rich descriptions of experience? Did the conversation flow? Related to this, I wanted to see how the interactive element of the interview technique would work. Could I elicit responses without directing thought inappropriately? I also needed to ensure that, technically, the interviewing would work over distance. I asked two heads of international schools whom I knew if they would be willing to assist in the pilot interviews. I felt they would be honest with feedback.

The pilot study was useful. I modified the documentation aiming to make it clearer to the participant. I considered changing the structure of the interview schedule. I intended to ask the head of school his or her views on each question and then whether he or she thought the views were aligned with those of the board. From the feedback, I realised that this was a weaker element in the design as heads could not always be sure what boards thought. I also concluded that I should focus primarily on the head of school and his or her own personal experience. Nonetheless, I chose to leave the questions in the schedule to see what data might come forth.

I clarified how I would ask some questions in the hope that it would negate the need for me to clarify questions during interview. I also had to consider carefully how to draw the participant back to the main question if it was drifting away from the main topic when there was a risk of cutting short a thought process. Still

further, I had to consider how much to clarify, paraphrase and lead during the interactive interview. I concluded that I needed to be more succinct. I ascertained that interesting and relevant data could be collected and was able to find the optimal arrangement for recordings. I decided that while SKYPE would be used, I would only use audio. This would use less bandwidth and therefore reduce the risk that the call would be of poor quality or interrupted. I then began the main inquiry.

I sent an invitation to the listserv of AISH. This included information on the research: an outline of the inquiry, timelines, ethical matters and a consent form, and information on the interview procedure. Twelve heads of school expressed interest in being interviewed. From these I used data from ten participants. One of the potential participants could not be included as he was currently a first-time head of school and therefore had not completed a full cycle from hiring to leaving the position. Another participant was not included in the final ten though was interviewed. However, the communication was not entirely clear. Most of the recording was subsequently erased in error while trying to address this. I did not feel I could request a second interview.

When interviewing I needed to ensure that questions did not elicit a preferred response e.g., Do you agree that performance management (PM) is beneficial? This type of question is closed and asks for a yes or no response. Therefore, semi-structured open-ended questions that allow for multiple responses of varying length were chosen. I hoped that the interaction would be comfortable by establishing a rapport with the participant, an important element highlighted by Partington (2001, p.42): “The quality of data obtained can vary considerably depending upon the skill of the interviewer in establishing rapport, following up leads and demonstrating attention and interest.” Each question was designed to catalyse a conversation as I asked them to describe their current circumstances and then how they thought it should be.

A suitable time for an online interview of one hour using SKYPE was arranged and recorded digitally. A break in the internet connection was always possible so arrangements were made for this eventuality. If we were unable to reconnect, we would reschedule another time to talk. At the outset of the interview, I began again with a recap of the inquiry and asked for consent to record the interview.

For my first research question - How are heads of not-for-profit international schools prepared for their work? I asked the participants to tell me about their roles and responsibilities then whether they were given information on what was expected of them. I asked if them if the board expected them to lead in a particular way. My aim was to understand if information on the board's aims, school goals, priorities, a job description or similar was given to the head of school. This was followed by a question aimed at uncovering the attributes that were expected of the head of school, if any. My next question focused on how the board defined success. This was to discover if the head of school was aware of anything that could be considered a guide to the direction of the school or goals for the head. This completed the questions on the orientation of the participant to his or her work. I also explored the nature of the board membership and its relationship with the head of school.

I moved to the second of my research questions - How is performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools conceived, structured and organized? I asked who was involved in the performance management process to understand how the process operated and perhaps any underpinning philosophical position that might drive it. I cross referenced this by exploring the relationship between the board and the head of school. I then asked about the criteria used in performance management, how these were derived, and the outcome of the process.

For my third research question - How do heads of not-for-profit international schools perceive their performance management processes? - I explored the head of school's perception of the purpose of the performance management process through a synthesis of their answers. These triggered discussion on the effectiveness of the process.

My fourth research question - Does performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools appear to be linked to tenure? – led me to ask the heads about his or her departure. This was an open question. Without being explicit I was investigating different possibilities: I wanted to know whether he or she felt that the process of performance management had, in their view, favourably, unfavourably, indeterminately or inconsequentially influenced their departure and therefore tenure. (See Appendix 2 for Phase 1 interview questions)

From the narratives, I hoped to understand key ideas or themes that could then be considered in the design of the questionnaire in Phase 2. To do this, I coded the interview responses.

### 3.4.2 Phase 1 - Data analysis method

The qualitative data was of help in understanding the lives and experiences of the ten heads of school as the responses were in their own words. The interviews were transcribed into text files. The text data were then coded. Coding is the process by which we use a word or a short phrase that “symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” Saldaña (2009, p.3). I undertook content analysis using different coding approaches and thus coded data into categories or "families".

There are various forms of coding which are summarized well by Saldaña (2009). Structural coding was used as the semi-structured format of the interview meant that the questions themselves generally structured the data into blocks of related data. These were identified. Descriptive coding was used for finding topics that were seen within and across larger blocks of related data. Emotion coding was used to isolate emotional responses expressed by the participants. This was sometimes linked to magnitude coding which highlighted the intensity, frequency and focus of the emotion. Process coding was used quite a lot as this identified the mechanisms related to performance management. Values coding which identifies values, beliefs and attitudes expressed was more difficult to identify yet can reveal what drives decisions or actions. Evaluation coding isolates judgments or the worth attributed to something which was particularly relevant in some questions.

Coding was applied to the interview transcripts. For each type of coding a different highlighter colour was used. For the first cycle of coding, each instance of text that related to the first form of coding was highlighted in the appropriate colour and a comment was made that characterised the text more precisely. (See Appendix 3) This was repeated for each form of coding.

In the second cycle, it was then possible to group comments into similar ideas These sub themes arose directly from the questions or indirectly as a result of the conversation. The question themes and the sub themes were then used to design the questionnaire though, as mentioned, questions about the board's views were excluded.

### 3.4.3 Phase 2 – Design and data collection method

The questionnaire I designed was informed by data from the Phase 1 interviews. I piloted the questionnaire with two heads of international schools whom I knew and different from those who had piloted the interview. They provided feedback on the questionnaire's structure, its clarity and the time it took to complete. Following their feedback, slight changes were made to some questions to improve clarity. The structure and the time needed to complete the questionnaire were found to be fine. Their participation was limited to this input.

The questionnaire link was sent with an introduction to the questionnaire to AISH to be posted to the members. The questions of the final questionnaire are shown below grouped under the research questions. See Appendix 4 for the format sent to participants. Phase 2 participants were asked to complete the structured online questionnaire accessible with a link. The ten closed questions were grouped around my four research questions.

As the questionnaire was designed to be completed by the participants alone, all efforts were made to ensure that the questions were clear and lacking ambiguity. The layout was designed to be polite, clear on expectations, easy to navigate and not too long. I planned for it to be completed in 30 minutes. As the choices of response offered to respondents could potentially influence their answers, questions were written to be as neutral as possible with suitable options for response. To allow for explanation, expansion or exception, space for further comments was made available. The questionnaire was designed to allow respondents to review their earlier answers and return to the questionnaire if they were forced to take a break. Confidentiality was respected though participants were told that their IP address would be known to me. When requesting participation from members of AISH, anonymity was promised and respected.

However, time, date stamps and IP address information were retrievable. Only one entry per IP address was permitted.

Research Question 1 **-** How are heads of not-for-profit international schools prepared for their work?

Q1. How many years were you in the school you have selected?

Q2. Were you informed of the board's expectations relating to your role and responsibilities or the goals and priorities of the board during your tenure?

Q3. What was the structure and membership of the board?

Q4. How did the board see its role and relationship with you?

Research Question 2 **-** How is performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools conceived, structured and organized?

Q5. What sort of performance management (PM) process was in place during your tenure?

Q6. Who was involved in the performance management process?

Q8. What were the specific criteria used in the performance management process?

Research Question 3 **-** How do heads of not-for-profit international schools perceive their performance management processes?

Q7. What was the purpose of the performance management process?

Q9. To what extent did you feel that the performance management system was effective?

Research Question 4 **-** Does performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools appear to be linked to tenure?

Q1. How many years were you in the school you have selected?

Q10. Did the performance management process and the way it was managed play any role in your departure?

### 3.4.4 Phase 2 – Data analysis method

The quantitative data were partly analysed by the software used for the questionnaire – Survey Monkey. However, this had to be analysed and edited further as the data of some respondents were invalid for some questions: some respondents had not read or comprehended the participation requirements of having completed one headship in a school and were still in their first headship. These were excluded from the analysis of questions relating to tenure. In addition, extra data (Phase 2a and 3) were collected later so needed to be considered in finalising the data to be used.

The themes and sub themes relating to each research question identified in Phase 1 formed the framework for the analysis of the questionnaire data. Later cross analyses exploring relationships between data from different questions was undertaken.

### 3.4.5 Phase 2a – Design and data collection method

This phase was a follow up to the Phase 2 work. As reported in the findings, Question 1 seemed to be ambiguous. Respondents might have given the number of years that they were working at the school to which they referred rather than the number of years as head of school. For this reason, I chose to send out another very short survey to the respondents via AISH, clarifying Question 1 and asking participants to state specifically how many years they had been the head of school in the school to which they had referred in the questionnaire. I then matched IP addresses from the original data and the new data to see if any corrections were needed.

### 3.4.6 Phase 2a – Data analysis method

Where there were differences between the respondent's original answer to question 1 and the answer given in the Phase 2a mini questionnaire, the new data were used.

### 3.4.7 Phase 3 – Design and data collection method

Phase 3 was undertaken in November 2018, about six months after the original survey. It aimed to serve two purposes. First, it was further attempt to verify the data relating to Question 1 of the original questionnaire. Second, it sought to reveal how many heads of school had changed school since the first survey in the previous academic year. This, I hoped, would offer another way of looking at the tenure of heads of school. The questionnaire consisted of three questions: "How many years were you head of school in the school you chose to recall from your past?"; "Which country were you in when you completed the questionnaire in May 2018?"; and "As a head of school, have you changed school (or organisation) since May 2018?"

### 3.4.8 Phase 3 – Data analysis method

The data of the questionnaire were analysed in two parts. First, the responses to Question 1 - relating to the years as head of school - were compared with the original answers in the Phase 2 questionnaire. This was done by comparing the responses from similar IP addresses. The newer verified data from Phase 2 and 2a replaced corresponding original data from Question 1. I then undertook a final analysis. Second, the turnover of heads of school was determined as a percentage of heads of school who were now – in a different academic year - in a different school.

## 3.5 Critical analysis of the methodology

The basic notion of a mixed methods approach based on a qualitative phase followed by a quantitative phase I felt was sound. The generally open nature of the interview questions, albeit around defined research questions, led to rich feedback around question themes and the opening up of new themes. These were helpful for the Phase 2 questionnaires. Nonetheless, there were some aspects of the

structure and the execution of the methods chosen where design and implementation might have been better.

In Phase 1, the pilot interviews generally went well. My decision not to use video was probably the right one as these recordings were for the most part clear. I learnt something about the questions and how they might be answered though did not go through question by question with them post interview to analyse each. Although I asked for critical feedback at the end of the interviews about the structure of the questions, and received some helpful comments, I did not ask about whether they felt they had sufficient time or if they felt that I had led them inappropriately to answer in a particular way. This was a lost opportunity.

When considering the sample for the main interviews of this phase, my choice to engage participants who were members of AISH seems appropriate though there are some potential weaknesses in the sample. While the members of AISH represent the range of international schools worldwide, calling for participants may have led to those with motivations to talk about exceptional situations to volunteer. Equally, they might have been inclined to discuss their experience in the hope that it would further education or at least support research. Alternatively, I could have sought participants with defined profiles relating to, for example, nationality, gender or experience. This would have moved further from a random sample but guaranteed representation from different groups. However, the size of the groups in the population from which they would be drawn were unknown so, by this means, the sample may have comprised disproportionate representation. I concluded this offered no firm advantage over the sampling process I used which also carried the same risk. I received 12 expressions of interest. Of these I might have considered the representation of nationalities which was skewed towards North American. However, I felt that nationality was not critical and that the more important factor was that they had been a head of a not for profit international school. I also reflected on the gender balance. The original group of ten I selected included three females. This dropped to two as one of the recordings was lost. The only possible substitution was male. However, again, I felt that the position held more importance in this research than gender.

Interview questions were not known to the participants in advance so greater detail may have come to the fore if the participants had been able to reflect on the

questions ahead of interview. Nonetheless, one strength of my approach was that elements that may have been important to the individual were probably those that they remembered most readily. Words carry nuanced meanings so some of the questions benefitted from a dialogue. I aimed to ask questions that would not lead to a limited response or influence a participant to respond in a certain way. When I summarised a response or tried to get clarity from a participant on what they meant, there is a risk that I shaped the response. Similarly, when trying to link responses to the next question or introducing a new question, I could have said too much with respect to the nature of the response I was looking for. This was the case, for example, when I asked about any expectations of leadership style that the board might have had for the head. I gave examples of what I meant in order to clarify the question. While I may have influenced the terminology used by the participants in interview, I did not feel that I unduly influenced the participant to respond in one way or another. However, Gadamer (2004) might challenge me on this as the participant should be allowed to use his or her own words.

As a British English-speaking former head, I also realised that my positionality could have influenced responses. Considering first language, Cormier (2018, p.328) states “linguistic positionality matters. When a researcher does not speak the same dominant language(s) as his or her participants, data collection is impacted.” Two participants were not native English speakers but, in these cases, their education and /or positions in English-speaking schools over many years would suggest that language would not limit their ability to fully understand questions or respond to them honestly.  Transcription was more challenging on occasion, but I never felt that that the meaning of the participant’s spoken words was unclear. It might have been helpful if I had shared the transcribed text with the participants for verification. With respect to potential power differentials relating to status or class, something that can exist even if the same language spoken, I did not perceive an issue. The interviewer and the interviewee probably had similar degrees of capital.

Considering the first of three tensions in positionality described by Hopkins, Regehr and Pratt (2017), the general and the particular axis, it was challenging to listen to the responses while also trying to place them in the larger picture of developing ideas. There was only time for fleeting thoughts of this larger picture as the interview needed to flow. In the second tension, that of phenomenological

attitude, I was unable to put aside pre-conceived ideas and take a fully objective stance as with the Socratic-hermeneutic method there was a need to engage with and relate to the emerging ideas in order to gain greater understanding. Connecting my experience and knowledge with that of the interviewee may have helped understanding. However, the inherent risk in doing that is the possible steering of responses and meaning by the interviewer. There were times when I felt that I said too much when asking a question or in summarising the response. The third tension comes from trying to move between recording the interview, albeit automatically and giving meaning to it. Again, with the method chosen, I felt a need to interpret what I was hearing in order to respond to the interviewee. This could have resulted in the exchange being driven by my interpretation and my choice of words. It is difficult to say how influential I was.

On occasion, questions elicited responses relating to later questions in the interview thus making it more difficult to maintain my intended flow. As participants chose how they would respond to each question tangential discussions occurred that had to be brought back to the main structure. These issues are inherent risks in a Socratic-Hermeneutic interview approach where interactive dialogue aims to discuss ideas. On balance, the interviews flowed well and the recordings were generally clear bar the one case.

Coding was a challenge. With so many forms, it was difficult sometimes to decide what would be most appropriate for given text. Indeed, I concluded that different coding could apply to the same text. In some cases, it was difficult to understand the intent of the interviewee in the response given. Though I tried to gain clarity in questioning some elements of one transcript were difficult to code other than first phase tagging. This led to some transcripts offering a clearer more detailed picture a participant's experience than others. The risk with this is that one can give stronger weighting to one participant over another. I worked hard to avoid this.

In analysing qualitative data, one must determine its trustworthiness. (Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007). One aspect of this is credibility. In this study, there was a prolonged engagement that was sufficient for the participants to expand on their thoughts. However, I need to acknowledge that responses would have been shaped by a participant's memory and by conscious decisions on what and how to report events. In sensitive questions, for example about tenure, it was possible

that participants were less willing to discuss their role in their departure or the decision regarding their departure. My experience of the participants' settings helped me in the interviews and enhanced the prolonged engagement, to some degree. Persistent observation, another criterion of credibility suggested by Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007), would generally apply to a situation that is ongoing. This was not feasible here. However, I queried perceived important points for trustworthiness by requesting more detail. In some cases, I returned to points in conversations as a form of cross-checking. Triangulation, in the true sense of verifying and validating data through other means, at other times and by other people, was not carried out for each individual participant though the Phase 2 questionnaire that followed the interviews allowed for confirmation or otherwise of responses to general themes that surfaced in the interviews. Peer debriefing where an independent peer reviews the data was not employed and negative case analysis were not formally undertaken either. Ongoing critical review of data, especially contradictory or outlier data, were kept in mind.

Participant transcript checks were not undertaken. In retrospect this could have been valuable to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and to prompt explanation of meaning where it was not perhaps clear. In doing this, it may also have led participants to request a change if they regretted something they had said or wished to give a different impression. This possibility suggests that there might be ethical reasons to verify a transcript. If a participant wished for a part of the interview to not to be used or indeed wanted to pull out of the study, this would be their right and their file would have been deleted. As the participants in this study were anonymised it seems unlikely that a check on transcript would lead to this result. However, there may be a position that suggests a check, for ethical reasons, should have been undertaken.

On the question of transferability (Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007), or how well the findings are generalisable, is always open to question. What was common among all participants was their setting, a not-for-profit international school and their employment as head of school by a governing body. This setting has been described to a large extent in the literature review. While common ideas emerged, the sample was small and there are many unknown factors that can influence such a study, one being the participants' motivation to participate. Therefore, as each situation is unique, drawing conclusions on transferability is not feasible. With

respect to dependability, the only external audit of my research activities was my supervisor. This was a light review and nothing was indicated to be inconsistent with acceptable standards of reliability.

When considering the authenticity of the data, as defined by Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007), I turned first to the criterion of fairness. The transcripts and the summaries of the key findings from the interviews were not shared with the participants so are potentially vulnerable to my prejudice, bias or perspective. For example, there is always the risk of confirmation bias. This concept is where one sees in data what one hopes to see, where objectivity is lost and one sees confirmation of a preconceived thought or bias. Other than confirmation bias, coding is vulnerable to interpretation. Nuances within the dialogues may be lost or over-emphasised. This was something about which I needed to be aware. Concerning other forms of authenticity, I do not know whether the interviews led to any changes in the participants' constructs of their situation or whether this will result in any actions on their part. Thus, I cannot claim high levels of authenticity, as defined by Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007).

The pilot in Phase 2 was again small. A more extensive pilot may have drawn my attention to issues, such as Question 1, that may have led to more revision, better structured questions and, in one or two cases, simpler questions. Although the questionnaire of Phase 2 was revised after the pilot, the clarity of Question 1 should have been better. Of the 84 responses, 19 were excluded from the analysis as the participants were not providing information from a previous school. This made it impossible for them to answer Question 1 about years of tenure or Question 10 about why they left the head of school position. The ambiguity in Question 1 that led me to send out a second questionnaire to seek clarity (Phase 2a). The original Question 1 in the Phase 2 questionnaire asked the participant how long they were in the school they chose. While this was in the context of being a head of school, it could have been interpreted as the total number of years the participant had been in the school. In the second questionnaire (Phase 2a), I was able to "correct" data for three respondents. There is a risk that others who might have submitted incorrect data in the first questionnaire and did not respond to the second (Phase 2a). Only 16 replied to the Phase 2a questionnaire. As the original questionnaire was anonymous, I could not contact individual respondents. This was again a problem in the Phase 3 questionnaire administered one year

later. In this there were 36 respondents. However, the IP addresses rarely matched those in the first Phase 2 questionnaire. Indeed, only three matched. This meant that I was able to verify the data for only a further three participants from the first Phase 2 questionnaire relating to Question 1. Nonetheless, there is a potential weakness in the data relating to Question 1. The clarity of the Phase 2 questionnaire, other than this, was satisfactory.

Both consistency and objectivity were seen to be appropriate. I used the same questionnaire for all participants and did not interfere with the data collection nor did I manipulate any data, other than to verify data for Question 1 and correct where necessary. The usability and length of the questionnaire appeared fine based on the responses and the average time taken to complete the questionnaire. Concerning confidentiality, only the IP addresses of participants were known and data were not shared with anyone other than my supervisor and examiners. When considering the truth value (Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007) of this quantitative element of my research we can see that the difficulties outlined limit statistical analysis. Nonetheless, I believe it is still worth considering the rigour in objectivist terms to understand what factors may have influenced the results. In broad terms, internal validity was not threatened by historical events, maturational or mortality issues. Selection of participants was only limited by experience and position. I did not interfere with the self-selecting group other than to ensure eligibility. Mixing between participants leading to undue influence seems unlikely as there was no benefit. The questionnaire changed for the few follow up questions in Phase 2a and 3 so different responses were obtained in some cases. This meant that although the questions were similar and allowed for correction, there was a mixing of data from three time periods. With respect to face validity there were no concerns expressed about the use of a questionnaire or indeed any queries about the questions as a method for collecting these data. However, as a self-reporting process on a potentially sensitive topic, that of tenure, there is the possibility that participants responded defensively. As with the interviews, more may have been motivated to participate because of negative experiences rather than positive. With regards to content validity, the questionnaire explored different dimensions of performance management and offered a range of responses. When considering the external validity, the data collected could provoke thinking about similar situations elsewhere.

In summary, the methodology was sound in principle. In practice, there were elements that could be improved. However, the interview data from ten heads of school is rich and offers clear perspectives and deep insights on performance management in not-for-profit international schools. The questionnaire data offers an overview of performance management based on the input of 63 heads of similar international schools.  Though one or two questions might have been better, the findings are useful in providing a picture of performance management in not-for-profit international schools.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### 4.1 Research data presentation

In this section, I present the research data collected from this inquiry. They are derived from interviews with ten heads of school (Phase 1) and three questionnaires (Phases 2, 2a and 3). Phase 2 was completed by 84 heads of school, of which 63 met the criteria for the sample, that is heads of not-for-profit international schools who had completed a headship. Phase 2a and 3 were completed by 16 and 36 heads respectively from the 63. Data from 2a and 3 were used to verify data in Phase 2. Data collected in Phases 1 and 2 are arranged under the four research questions.

As there were so many potential variables in this research a cause and effect analysis was not feasible. However, I have chosen to present numerical data narratives in both phases to indicate scale. I hope to see trends and relationships that might be of interest and indicative of areas worth exploring further.

#### 4.1.1 Research Question 1 Data - How are heads of not-for-profit international schools prepared for their work?

The main theme related to this question is *expectations*. The interviews and questions 2, 3 and 4 of the questionnaire cover this. The data are organised under three sub themes: *degree of orientation; board structure, membership and head of school relations;* and *changing expectations.*

*Degree of orientation*

In Phase 1, the degree of orientation to the direction of the school and related expectations was felt to be vague or insufficient by seven of the ten interview participants. Several received guidance such as a job description or an accreditation self-study but most spoke only about limited discussions they had with the board regarding the school and its needs. Participants 02 and 09 recalled that the board was vague. The former said: “Nobody sat with me and explained in detail what the expectations were.” The latter spoke about goals given:

> "I would say generally yes, although they were pretty broad and not particularly specific…. You know things like you know effective management of the school and you know what effective hiring of teachers and effective supervision of teachers you know increasing student enrolment overseeing finances." (Participant 09)

Participant 01 felt that orientation was lacking and criticized the seriousness of the board's approach:

> "I think I would have wanted the board to have well-defined goals at the beginning of the year ideally aligned to a strategic plan which derived from the school's mission and the results of accreditation. I would have liked the board to take much more seriously a set of essential agreements that we spoke about at great length at our retreat." (Participant 01)

Participant 02 was frustrated that the board was preoccupied on a project so that "success was the meeting of goals that came up as we went along." One participant (10) felt that only part of the picture was shared with her. "How specific were the board with me? Only the good points." Participant (04), though given a job description, was not given orientation to the board's goals and had to sense what the board wanted; she felt it was a different relationship with her than with her predecessor. This lack of clarity in orientation extended to leadership. Most were not asked to lead in a defined way. Participants 07 and 08 noted that leadership was left in their hands. "They [the board] kind of formed their understanding of what school leadership looks like through me" **(**Participant 07). This sentiment was equally felt by Participant 08.

> "I don't think they gave me a sense of what type of leader they wanted, I think they gave a sense of the point in time in the school's history and what we needed to accomplish, and I think they just let me get on with whatever my leadership style was going to be to get that done." (Participant 08)

The board at Participant 03's school hinted at an authoritarian approach but also allowed the head of school to choose his own approach. The board tried

to explain their hopes to others. Participant 06 was asked to be “engaged and visible, to create new energy” while Participant 04 stated that a “can do attitude” was expected. Participant 01 felt that he was aligned to the board:

> “They were asking me about my style of leadership, and they must have been happy with what they heard or they probably wouldn’t have hired me.” (Participant 01)

In the case of Participant 05, he felt he was expected to be a “transformational leader”. However, the board’s expectations for this participant were high:

> “I think it’s one of these observations, you know choose your prophet, Jesus for that matter, or Jesus on a good day, but there was certainly a sense that the leader needed to be present, you know, sort of, as you always hear about, visible, accessible, warm, moral, you know, highest moral integrity, hardworking, visionary, inspiring, a good communicator, all of those were sought after.” (Participant 05)

In contrast to the concerns expressed, two participants were pleased with the orientation they received:

> “It was pretty clear what they expected of me, details of how they wanted me to work, they actually outline the whole plan.… so basically they were pretty much almost bullet points saying 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 things we want you to do and you can tell us what priority you want to put on them but this is what we want you to accomplish.” (Participant 03)

> “I was given quite a lot of lessons to manage the school properly…. I definitely think we were [aligned] and one of the reasons of course was that through each year there was very healthy dialogue between me and the board chair.”
> (Participant 06)

Some worked with the board to determine direction and expectations as in the case of Participant 06 who said: “We worked together to set out what the goals would be.” However, as indicated earlier, others noted that the board were unclear

about goals and expected the head of school to set them. Participant 04 noted: "During interview, they wanted to hear from me…, my vision for the school and the goals." Others spoke of similar experiences:

> "I had to initiate that conversation with the board so that we could get some degree of specificity….. the board did not have a really clear articulation of expectations, of metrics, that sort of thing."
> (Participant 05)

> "I guess what you've got to understand is I set the school's goals. I set the school's direction, I wrote the schools strategic plan and I sold it to them." (Participant 07)

Participant 03 saw that when trust with the board was built up over time, goals could change. He was asked for goals because the board did not have anything specific to request:

> "And so, at one point, they said 'what do you think your goals should be'? Because I think they were running out of ideas of what the goals should be…once it was done what they wanted. The school was accredited, plus enrolment was healthy, the results were ok, so they didn't know what to do anymore, like 'what's next, what else?' So, they said 'why don't you come up with some goals and we will talk about it.'" (Participant 03)

In summary, six of the interview participants felt that orientation was insufficient while in the Phase 2 questionnaire, 40% of respondents indicated that they were only loosely informed of expectations. (Table 9).

Table 9. Information given to the head of school on board expectations relating to the role and responsibilities or the goals and priorities of the board.

| Information given to HoS on board expectations relating to the role and responsibilities or the goals and priorities of the board. | Responses | % |
|---|---|---|
| Fully informed | 20 | 32 |
| Fairly well informed | 18 | 28 |
| Loosely informed | 25 | 40 |
| Not informed | 0 | 0 |

Overall, 60% were fairly well or fully informed. When cross referencing with tenure, (Table 10) we can see a difference of 1.9 years in the average (mean) tenure between these heads and those who were loosely informed. A clear pattern in the median results cannot be seen.

Table 10. Relationship between information given to the head of school on board expectations and tenure

| Information given to the head of school on board expectations relating to the role and responsibilities or the goals and priorities of the board. | Tenure - Mean in years | Tenure – Median in years |
|---|---|---|
| Not informed | 0 | 0 |
| Loosely informed | 6.0 | 6.0 |
| Fairly well informed | 6.9 | 5.0 |
| Fully informed | 7.9 | 5.5 |

*Board structure, membership and head of school relations*

The interview data show five boards were self-perpetuating, one parent-elected and four hybrids – a mixture of elected and self-perpetuating. In the questionnaire a different picture was seen (Table 11). Parents can be seen to dominate on elected and hybrid boards. In self-perpetuating boards, a mix of parents and non-parents are as common as those with one or the other.

Table 11. Board structure and membership – Detail

| Board structure and membership - Detail | % |
|---|---|
| Elected - School parents only | 19 |
| Elected – Non school members only | 0 |
| Elected - Mixed | 6 |
| Self-perpetuating - School parents only | 8 |
| Self-perpetuating – Non school members only | 6 |
| Self-perpetuating - Mixed | 13 |
| Hybrid - School parents only | 19 |
| Hybrid – Non school members only | 0 |
| Hybrid - Mixed | 16 |
| Other - School parents only | 2 |
| Other – Non school members only | 5 |
| Other - Mixed | 6 |

The results of grouping board structure and membership data from the questionnaire can be seen in table 12.

Table 12. Board structure and membership – Summary

| Board structure and membership | Responses | % |
|---|---|---|
| Self-perpetuating | 17 | 27 |
| Elected | 16 | 25 |
| Hybrid | 22 | 35 |
| Other | 8 | 13 |

Cross referencing these data with tenure indicates that heads in schools with elected boards remain in post longer. (Table 13)

Table 13. Board structure and membership and head of school tenure.

| Board structure and membership | Tenure – Mean in Years | Tenure – Median in years |
|---|---|---|
| Elected | 8,8 | 7.0 |
| Self-perpetuating | 6,4 | 5.0 |
| Hybrid | 6,1 | 5.0 |
| Other | 6,1 | 5.5 |

All those interviewed mentioned their relationship with the board more than the structure and membership. In terms of the underpinning philosophical model of the relationship, two (Participants 02 and 03) implied that it was, at least initially, agent- principal – where the board does not trust the head of school and directs him or her:

> "I would say it was definitely a sort of agent-principal, not nearly so hostile as it had been early on but [when] times would get tough you would see how clearly they would retreat to those positions." (Participant 02)

> "As I said, they [were] not necessarily authoritarian but there were clearly delegated tasks… it became less-structured and more relationship-based…more a partnership." (Participant 03)

Participant 01 felt the approach was between agent-principal and stakeholder. Participant 10 defined the relationship as variable while Participants 04, 05, 06,

and 08 indicated indirectly that the relationship was one of stewardship. “Very much a partnership”, stated Participant 05 and Participant 06 noted:

> “Yep, you could describe it as a good partnership with the board chair and that was where a lot of the work got done in terms of the board/head communication and cooperation.” (Participant 06)

More often, participants spoke about the particular circumstances or the specificity of the relationship rather than underlying models. Indeed, personal relations featured a great deal:

> “I had some fine chairs and I had some fine board members who did give me latitude and who did trust me and so forth. But I had lots of others who really came to the board with one or two particular agenda items and their role was to get those.” (Participant 09)

Participant 07 declared that the relationship was one where the power was in one person’s hands, the board chair. He suggested the model might be termed “I don't give a f**k”. However, Participant 07 also pointed out that:

> “The relationship between myself and the board chair was very, very strong and personal… allowed us, I think, to develop a … relationship-based model.” (Participant 07)

Personal relations featured a great deal and were clearly important to the interview participants.

> “The relationship with the new board chair, it was much more operational, the board chair wanted to be involved in many decisions that the old board chair never bothered with…. I very much got the feeling that they didn’t trust me that much anymore… It was a bit stormy, contemptuous, it’s maybe a bit strong a word but it was definitely not without friction.” (Participant 01)

> “I mean, I had a real hard time building that same kind of relationship with this second board chair as I had with the first. And in the end, he was the reason I left.” (Participant 04)

Some highlighted the degree of instability of board membership, particularly in relation to the board chair. Participant 05 stated, “So, over a 10-year period I had 4 board chairs” and Participant 02,

> “Ok, so I was hired by one board chair and lived under three totally different ones in the three years I was there – a new board chair every year.” (Participant 02)

The relationship between the board chair and the head of school appears to be important as it was mentioned by all interview participants. The results from the questionnaire are shown below. (Table 14)

Table 14. Board professional relationship with the head of School – Detail

| Board professional relationship with the head of school | Responses | % |
|---|---|---|
| Board goals were given to you. The board then closely monitored you. (Agent-principal) | 5 | 8 |
| Partnership of shared goals and support. (Partnership) | 19 | 31 |
| Support for school goals through board’s expertise and resources. (Partnership) | 5 | 8 |
| Guarding parents’ goals and interests. | 1 | 2 |
| Board agreed goals with you then guided and monitored you at distance. (Partnership) | 16 | 26 |
| Board agreed goals with you then monitored you closely. (Agent-principal) | 3 | 5 |
| Policy setting. You worked on goals within a monitored framework. | 2 | 3 |
| Context specific and variable. | 0 | 0 |
| Unclear | 11 | 18 |

Grouping the relationships into four: agent - principal, partnership, other and unclear, we see that the most common relationship is partnership. (Table 15)

Table 15: Board professional relationship with the head of School – Summary of relationship groups

| Board professional relationship group with the head of school | Responses | % |
|---|---|---|
| Agent-principal | 8 | 13 |
| Partnership | 40 | 64 |
| Other | 3 | 5 |
| Unclear | 11 | 18 |

*Changing expectations*

The effects of changing board membership were expressed by Participant 06:

> "When you've got a high board turnover situation, particularly with elected boards, the board that hires is not necessarily the board that fires so the values, expectations, hidden agendas, visible agendas can be quite different." (Participant 06)

Participant 09 was able to give a good example of this:

> "Yeah, it was a place in which the board turnover was considerable. In eight years, I had six or seven board chairs and I had 45 different board members." (Participant 09)

Other participants confirmed the negative impact. For two participants this was when Board Chair changed:

> "Then the board chair changed and the new board chair had completely different expectations, which she did not make clear to me at the start and it came to situations like 'yes, but why didn't you tell me about this?'. As a board chair you need be informed of this. And I said 'yes, I can understand that, but your former, your predecessor never wanted to be informed so I didn't think you wanted to be', 'yes, but now I want to be'." (Participant 01)

> "I tried my best to adjust to her expectations but to be honest our relationship grew increasingly sour and uncooperative which was one reason I didn't stay at that school much longer after that."
> (Participant 01)

For Participant 02 the board who had appointed the head of school had made it clear what they wanted at the time of appointment, but the direction changed. "I was brought in with a very explicit understanding that I was to revitalise teaching and learning at the school", stated Participant 02. Upon taking up the position nearly two years later he found something very different and a loss of explicit direction:

> "There was not a single sole remaining on the board who had appointed me. So, I had 9 vacant faces wondering who the hell I was and why I was the heir to my predecessor… They were a tabula rasa waiting to be told what needed to be done but they were highly opinionated tabula rasa that was waiting to see whether I provided them with goals that were aligned with hidden biases."
> (Participant 02)

Another discovered that change was imminent as he took up his position. Participant 08 discovered that, "The day I was flying down for an orientation thing [sic] they had a board meeting and so they all resigned that day".

It was clear that all but three interview respondents felt that the communication of board expectations could have been better. Some welcomed the chance to participate in setting direction and goals. The head of school relationship with the board was seen as something of great importance. The majority of interview participants and questionnaire respondents were seen to have a relationship with the board that could be termed partnership and no more than 20% characterized it as principal-agent. Five of the heads of school expressed concern about the negative aspects of changes of board membership, particularly if it was the chair, as expectations changed.

### 4.1.2 Research Question 2 Data - How is performance management of heads of not-for-profit international schools conceived, structured and organized?

Research question 2 is focused on the *performance management process*. The interviews and questions 5, 6 and 8 of the questionnaire cover this. The data are organised under four sub themes: *status; structure; organisation;* and *outcome.*

*Status of the performance management process*

The status of the performance management process, that is the importance given to it by the board and the head of school, did not appear to be equal. "Oh, that I had to force feed to the board. They hadn't been doing it", recalled Participant 06. Reflecting on a similar experience, Participant 10 noted, "But I was the one in that particular school that initiated that in principle." Some participants were very much involved in the design of the performance management process. Participant 04 explained that, "At the end of my second year, I actually had formal evaluation where I put together the instrument." There was no direct question on status in the questionnaire but question 5 covers this indirectly."

*Structure of the performance management process*

Various types of criteria can be used in a performance management process. For some interview participants, the criteria were somewhat clear. Participant 08 indicated it was generic standards chosen by the Head of School and board as well as the board goals. Another, (Participant 04), stated that they were closely aligned to the job description but with the addition of personal goals. Participant 08 explained the process:

> "So, I would come up with what I thought were the goals for the year and I'd discuss those with the chair in advance. We'd go into our board workshop in the beginning of the year. At some point in the workshop we'd discuss them and if there were some changes then I'd go back. They generally endorsed them in concept and then in the September board meeting we'd approve them if there were some tweaks." (Participant 08)

Participant 06 said it was specific and limited goals: “It was more the outcomes and placements than anything else.” Participant 03 experienced something similar.

> “It was just the…er…enrolment. That’s the only plan that they had, was ….to get to a certain enrolment and the other plan, facility development.” (Participant 03)

Participant 09 was clear that between the board and head of school, it should be “a negotiation that neither party can be the prime director in having a successful approach. Participant 10 was given goals that were felt reasonable then discovered that there were other goals, more serious, that had not been mentioned. Participant 10 proposed a new process – a 360º evaluation - in subsequent years which materialized into a chat with no clear goals in writing. Participant 01 explained the process of determining criteria changed when the board chair changed.

In the questionnaire, respondents indicated that it was most common (51%) to have combinations of criteria types. (Table 16)

Table 16. Performance management – Type of criteria.

| Performance management – Criteria type | Responses | % |
|---|---|---|
| Board’s own generic standards. | 4 | 6 |
| Board's goals. | 3 | 5 |
| Head of school’s goals. | 7 | 11 |
| Head of school’s roles and responsibilities. | 3 | 5 |
| External agency standards. | 2 | 3 |
| Other criteria. | 4 | 6 |
| Combinations | 32 | 51 |
| No criteria. | 8 | 13 |

Looking more closely at the types of criteria, there are indications of how boards perceive their role with respect to performance management. The data show that the head of school has some influence on the criteria for the performance management process in 51% of cases. This suggests that agent-principal and partnership processes are almost equally common. (Table 17)

Table 17. Performance management – Source of criteria

| Performance management – Criteria source | % |
|---|---|
| Board selected criteria | 24 |
| Head of school selected criteria | 11 |
| Board and head of school selected criteria | 40 |
| External criteria only | 3 |
| Other criteria | 8 |
| No criteria | 13 |

The interview data provided more nuances and highlighted a lack of clarity in the criteria used.

> “Projects and continuous improving goals… Yeah so, I think again it would be part of the conversation, you know... None of this was as crystal clear as one would like. I mean there’s a huge degree of subjectivity in all of this.” (Participant 05)

> “Well, in particular they operated as a bunch of individuals not as a collective entity… I don't think that the board ever looked at my job description when doing my evaluation to even ask themselves had I achieved some of the things that were in the job description. For sure, and then since the goals set for me sort of came from different sorts of quarters even the assessment would have been different by person depending on whether it was the particular goal that they were interested in.” (Participant 09)

> “There are 28 of them and it’s not the 13 you write down that end up mattering….I can’t tell you what criteria they used, I think it was depending on how convincing I was. They didn’t give me, they didn’t have a set of outspoken [sic] criteria as to, what I was to fulfil or how I was to fulfil it, again, apart from the job description.” (Participant 02)

> “I think there was an extrapolation between personal character judgments and capacity to performing the role. So, there's this assumption by several members of the board that who you were as a person and as a character was directly related to whether or not you could actually do the job.” (Participant 07)

There was also concern that the criteria changed in some cases:

> "We changed the front end of it, the goal part remained the same, but the front end we changed. It was still based on the job description but also external standards of good practice for leaders." (Participant 04)

> "I felt as though what I had been brought in to do initially had been circumspect [sic] and the sands had shifted and I wanted to make sure that my overall evaluation and my understanding of what I need to accomplish was still in place." (Participant 10)

From the interview data, conversations suggested that the relationship with the board and how performance management was undertaken were as important as the criteria.

When looking at the relationship between the performance management criteria (Q8) and board expectations given to head of school (Q2), the questionnaire data suggest that when the criteria are determined by the head of school and the board together the head of school is more likely to be fully informed of the board's expectations than if the criteria are determined in a different way. (Table 18)

Table 18. Relationship between performance management criteria (Q8) and board expectations given to the head of school (Q2).

| Board expectations given to head of school (HOS) | Performance management criteria - Responses | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Board chosen | HOS chosen | Board and HoS shared | External | Other | No criteria |
| Not informed | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Loosely informed | 7 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Fairly well informed | 3 | 4 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Fully informed | 5 | 1 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

*Organisation of process*

Interview data showed that the board chair was always a participant in the performance management process, being alone in one case, with the head of

school in another couple and as member of the board in all other circumstances. The board involved the head of school in all but one case:

> "The evaluation took the form of a conversation between me and the board chair where he would share with me the survey results from the board members based on a metric…So that morphed in the last couple of years to a more behind closed doors situation."
> (Participant 07)

> "As far as appraisal was concerned, my appraisal at that time consisted of a very general kind of questionnaire, self-assessment, that I filled in and I had one meeting with the board chair."
> (Participant 01)

Participant 05 commented on a 360º process used. 05 felt that the questions asked of those giving feedback were "nebulous" which, coupled with the "temperaments "of individuals, meant that it was a "dangerous thing to do."

The results from the questionnaire (Table 19) largely mirrored the interviews and showed that the whole board participated in 71% of cases and that the board chair undertook the process alone in just 16% of cases. The head of school participated in 46% of schools suggesting that the board view the process as a top down evaluative one in almost half the cases.

Table 19. Performance management - Participants

| Performance Management Participants | Responses | % |
|---|---|---|
| Board | 19 | 30 |
| Board chair only | 10 | 16 |
| Head of school only | 3 | 5 |
| Board and head of school | 13 | 21 |
| Board chair and head of school | 4 | 6 |
| Board, head of school and others | 9 | 14 |
| Board and others | 4 | 6 |
| Outside agency only | 1 | 2 |

In the questionnaire, 65 respondents provided data on the formality and regularity of a performance management process. (Table 20) However, 12 respondents

indicated that they experienced multiple processes while in position, so they were excluded from the analysis on participants. Even when only one process was used 34% of respondents consider the process to have been inconsistent. Just over half the respondents had a formal and regular performance management system.

Table 20. Performance management – Process formality and regularity

| Performance management process | Responses | % |
|---|---|---|
| Formal and regular (at least annual) | 28 | 53 |
| Informal and regular (at least annual) | 7 | 13 |
| Formal and inconsistent | 11 | 21 |
| Informal and inconsistent | 7 | 13 |

*Outcome of performance management process*

In the interview data, feedback from the performance management processes was more often informal. One of the interview participants noted feedback as "getting an assessment of how I was doing in areas where I could focus on improvement" (Participant 06). Others agreed.

> "For four years I received no feedback at all….And so the feedback that I tended to receive was anecdotal from an individual on the board who took me to one side one side every now and then and said 'Hey I'm just hearing a couple of things you might want to think about'. So, it was more anecdotally individualised course correction than formal formative feedback. It was valuable none the less... It was unfortunate that the board didn't really get its act together with regard to more formal feedback." (Participant 07)

> "I would say that I never felt the board ever fully understood my job and what it was like. In particular, I didn't get very much positive reinforcement of my work from the board, more of a focus on the few things that they felt negatively about." (Participant 09)

> "We [board chair and head of school] discussed what was in the paper [self-assessed questionnaire] and then he said 'yeah ok that's great'… and did he ever even mention ways of improvement?… I think we just talked about what I reflected as self-assessment and he said "yeah that's fine, that's great" and "here's your bonus"… And again, that was only with the chairman and me, in a coffee bar, an hour in the morning of a normal work day." (Participant 01)

Another highlighted how the feedback process changed over time from being formal to one that was more a chat:

> "Initially, over the first year, I had a check review in the middle of the school year and the end of the year review. And it was very 'by the rule', very formal 360 and collect the data, analyse it and this is how it looks. So, it was very quantitative, and er was a few attention[sic] paid to comments but not much. But then when I look towards the end of my contract, the last review perhaps, it was just a chat. "yeah, good job". It was completely astray [sic]." (Participant 03)

From the questionnaire, 29 respondents from the 53 who reported on just one performance management process also reported on the degree of feedback. (Table 21) In summary, all but 7% received some degree of feedback.

Table 21. Performance management - Degree of feedback.

| Degree of feedback | Responses | % |
|---|---|---|
| Comprehensive | 13 | 45% |
| Limited | 14 | 48% |
| None | 2 | 7% |

Cross-referencing the type of feedback and the degree of feedback (Table 22) suggests that if the process is formal and regular, feedback is more likely to be comprehensive whereas if the process is informal or inconsistent, feedback is limited.

Table 22. Performance management – Type and degree of feedback.

| Type of feedback | Degree of feedback - Responses | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Comprehensive | Limited | None |
| Formal and regular (at least annual). | 10 | 1 | 1 |
| Informal and regular (at least annual). | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Formal and inconsistent. | 2 | 7 | 0 |
| Informal and Inconsistent. | 0 | 3 | 1 |

The questionnaire data on the organization of performance management, (Q5) and the board relationship with the head of school (Q4) (Table 23) shows that the process is more likely to be formal and regular when the relationship is one characterized by partnership. The data show that performance management is often informal and inconsistent when the relationship is unclear.

Table 23. Relationship between the organisation of the performance management process (Q5) and the board relationship with head of school (Q4) - Summary

| Board relationship with head of school | Organisation of the performance management process | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Formal and regular (at least annual) | Informal and regular (at least annual) | Formal and inconsistent | Informal and Inconsistent |
| Agent-principal | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Partnership | 22 | 7 | 7 | 1 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Unclear. | 2 | 0 | 1 | 5 |

The relationship between the performance management process (Q5) and board expectations given to head of school (Q2), suggests it is more likely to be formal and regular when the head of school is fairly well or fully informed of the board's expectations. (Table 24)

Table 24. Relationship between the organization of the performance management process (Q5) and board expectations given to the head of school (Q2)

| Board expectations given to head of school | Organization of the performance management process management - Responses | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Formal and regular | Formal and inconsistent | Informal and regular | Informal and inconsistent |
| Fully informed | 13 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Fairly well informed | 10 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Loosely informed | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Not informed | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

### 4.1.3 Research Question 3 Data - How do heads of not-for-profit international schools perceive their performance management processes?

The main theme for this question is *the value of the performance management process*. The interviews and questions 7 and 9 of the questionnaire cover this. The data are organised under two sub themes*: purpose of performance management* and *effectiveness of performance management.*

*Purpose of performance management*

The purpose of performance management was clear for some interview participants. Participant 03 noted the following:

> "Professional development was kind of boring for them but accountability, they were all over it because they wanted results and they knew what they wanted and they were expecting me to report on how am I going to deliver it…my plan to go to the next goal post. In terms of professional development, they were just….I had to tell them what professional development is." (Participant 03)

Accountability was perceived to be the main purpose of performance management in most cases. Participant 09 stated that, "I would have said it was largely accountability." Others agreed:

> “The purpose was that I was reflecting on the school year, what went well and what didn’t go so well, how can we improve for the next year and so I was sharing my plans with him [board chair]…In terms of giving an account of what was happening, yes, absolutely. In terms of accountability against certain benchmarks, no, that didn’t happen.” (Participant 01)

> “Probably professional development not. But, in terms of accountability and in terms of overall perception of the role performed, positive impact on the school, those kinds of concerns, yes [about accountability] .” (Participant 06)

> “You're the CEO, make this happen or if it doesn’t, we're going to hold you accountable.” (Participant 09)

Accountability was seen as important but not the sole purpose.

> “No, professional development, forget that. The only metric was accountability… All in one questionnaire. So, there were school goals, my goals and that was it…. The whole thing within 10 minutes…I think to the board the school goals mattered more than anything else… I would have liked something that was much more formative.” (Participant 07)

Some were comfortable with the balance in purpose between accountability and professional growth: “Yes, absolutely. It was definitely accountability as well as professional growth.” (Participant 04). Another concurred: “I would probably say stronger growth in professional development. With some accountability.” (Participant 08). Participant 05 reflected on the board’s evaluation of 05 as well as those 05 employs in school**:**

> **“**I think increasingly I am working on splitting developing conversation with evaluation conversation. That to me seems to me the interesting distinction, an important trend, which most people get wrong. You know, in the context of our conversation there would rarely be, you know, a complete segregation of those two things where there probably should be. (Participant 05)

This balance was mirrored in the questionnaire data. (Table 25)

Table 25. Performance management - Purpose.

| Performance management - Purpose | Responses | % |
|---|---|---|
| Accountability and professional development | 29 | 46 |
| Accountability | 22 | 36 |
| Professional development | 1 | 2 |
| Other | 5 | 8 |
| There was no perceived purpose | 6 | 10 |

The relationship between the purpose of performance management (Q7) and the board relationship with the head of school (Q4) (Table 26) indicates that for either agent-principal or partnership relationships the purpose is more often both accountability and professional development than accountability alone.

Table 26: Relationship between the purpose of performance management and the board relationship with the head of school - Summary

| Board relationship with head of school | Purpose of performance management - Responses | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Your accountability | Your professional development | Your accountability and professional development | Other | There was no perceived purpose |
| Agent-principal | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| Partnership | 16 | 0 | 20 | 3 | 0 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Unclear. | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 |

*Effectiveness of performance management*

While some could see purpose in the performance management process, the majority of interview participants were unimpressed with the effectiveness of the performance management system: Participant 05 noted that he felt all parties "were, to some degree, going through the motions and trying to do the very best, you know, with the best intentions" He commented on this further:

> "We experimented with a number of things. All of them cumbersome and not optimal but maybe that's the nature of the work… if you've had a different collection of people answering the questions, would you get the same result? Probably the answer is no. And is it valid, meaning, are those questions a valid measure of the experience of the school and the quality of the school, and the answer is probably also no." (Participant 05)

On evaluation, Participant 02 noted: "There was one that was clearly prescribed in policy and it was done poorly." Participant 06 saw some value in the process:

> "It was an interesting exercise and it really involved doing a lot of, probably healthy soul searching on both sides but the end of the day in terms of performance in the school itself or my own performance, I don't think it made much impact." (Participant 06)

However, Participant 06 added that "I think from my perspective now for the last 6 years, there's very little good head evaluation going on that I'm aware of".

Of note, was the response of Participant 09 who felt that the process tool, perhaps implying the process, was not important rather the relationship with the board:

> "I'm the longest serving director by a mile at the school and ever will be. The previous guy maybe stayed five years and that was way way… 30 years in the past. And in the 13 years I've gone they've had ten heads of school since then…It's not the tool it's the relationship." (Participant 09)

One participant felt that the process was effective. Participant 08 declared "It was really well done."

The questionnaire respondents were generally split on the effectiveness of performance management. (Table 27) This seems to reflect the comments of the interview participants. We see that the performance management process was broadly or completely effective in 43% of cases and so minimally or not at all effective in 57%.

Table 27. Performance management – Effectiveness

| Performance management - Effectiveness | Responses | % |
|---|---|---|
| Not at all. | 10 | 16 |
| Minimally. | 26 | 41 |
| Broadly. | 23 | 37 |
| Completely. | 4 | 6 |

Looking closely at the relationship between the effectiveness of the performance management process (Q9) and the board relationship with head of school (Q4) the questionnaire data of 62 respondents indicates that the process is more effective when the relationship is characterized as one of partnership rather than agent-principal. (Table 28).

Table 28. Relationship between effectiveness of performance management process (Q9) and the board relationship with the head of school (Q4).

| Board relationship with head of school | Effectiveness of performance management - Responses | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not at all | Minimally | Broadly | Completely |
| Board goals were given to you. The board then closely monitored you. (Agent-principal) | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Partnership of shared goals and support. (Partnership) | 0 | 6 | 10 | 2 |
| Support for school goals through board's expertise and resources. (Partnership) | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| Guarding parents' goals and interests. (Other) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Board agreed goals with you then guided and monitored you at distance. (Partnership) | 2 | 6 | 7 | 1 |
| Board agreed goals with you then monitored you closely. (Agent-principal) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Policy setting. You worked on goals within a monitored framework. (Other) | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Context specific and variable. (Other) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Unclear | 4 | 6 | 2 | 0 |

When grouping relationships (Table 29), 61% who characterized the relationship as partnership felt that performance management was broadly or completely effective compared to 12% of the group who had an agent-principal relationship.

Table 29. Relationship between effectiveness of performance management process (Q9) and the board relationship with the head of school (Q4) – Summary of relationship groups.

| Board relationship with head of school | Effectiveness of performance management | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Minimally or less effective. No. | % | Broadly or more effective. No. | % |
| Agent-principal | 7 | 88 | 1 | 12 |
| Partnership | 15 | 39 | 24 | 61 |
| Other | 3 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Unclear. | 10 | 83 | 2 | 17 |

### 4.1.4 Research Question 4 Data – Does performance management of heads of not-for-profit schools appear to be linked to tenure?

The main theme for this question is the *impact of performance management.* The interviews and questions 1 and 10 of the questionnaire cover this. The data are organised under the sub theme, *tenure.*

*Tenure*

A mixed picture was presented by the interview participants when asked if they felt that the performance management process was linked in any way to their departure. Participant 10 was clear, “No,” Participant 02 criticized the board.

> “It was the unstated goals, or it was completely unstated goals that formed the basis of my non-renewal. So, all the stuff that we sat down and agreed upon just seemed to be almost irrelevant to my relationship to my board.” (Participant 02)

On the other hand, Participant 05 stated:

> “I would say, that on some level, yes…They [the board] scratched their head and said ‘you know, is [HoS] the leader that we think we need right now for the, you know, for this period of the school’s history?” (Participant 05)

In the questionnaire, data from 63 respondents were used in relation to tenure – length of time in position. These were heads of school who had completed a "headship cycle" from appointment to leaving the position.

The data from Q1 below suggest that those with long tenure may have a disproportionate impact on the mean. If only those with less than ten years in position (78% of respondents) are considered the mean years of tenure is 4.9 years compared to 6.9 years for all respondents. (Table 30). The median remains 5 years perhaps suggesting that this is more representative.

Table 30. Tenure of heads of school

| Respondents | Responses | % | Mean - Years | Median - Years |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All | 63 | 100 | 6.9 | 5 |
| Those with less than 15 years tenure in one school | 57 | 91 | 5.8 | 5 |
| Those with less than 10 years tenure in one school | 49 | 78 | 4.9 | 5 |

When looking at the data of Phase 3 independently, they show a mean tenure of the 36 respondents to be 5.9 years and a median of 5 years. It also showed that 28% of heads of school were in new positions. From this, one might speculate that within four years, all the heads will have changed position. The Phase 3 mean and the speculation related to turnover suggest shorter tenure to the data from Phase 2.

In the questionnaire, 63 respondents provided data on why they left their position as head of school and whether performance management played a role. (Table 31)

Table 31. End of tenure – Nature of departure

| End of tenure - Nature of departure | % |
|---|---|
| I chose to leave at the end of contract and not to accept a new contract | 71 |
| I chose to leave before the end of contract | 16 |
| I left as my contract was cut short | 6 |
| I left at the end of contract as a new contract was not expected/offered. | 6 |

The role of performance management in the decision on leaving was given as follows by the 63 respondents. (Table 32)

Table 32. End of tenure – Role of performance management

| End of tenure – role of performance management (PM) | % |
|---|---|
| Not based on PM | 72 |
| Partly based on PM | 22 |
| Mainly based on PM | 3 |
| Completely based on PM | 3 |

To summarise, 94% stated their departure was “not” or only “partly based” on performance management. Examining the data further, we see that performance management did not play a major role whether the end of tenure was voluntary or involuntary. (Table 33)

Some questionnaire respondents commented.

> “The reason given for my departure was that I had failed to meet the goals the board had set. It was simply a fig leaf.” #45

> “Always unsure if I would be offered a contract and knowing if I was not offered it would be too late to look for another position.” #32

> “The school's board was terribly dysfunctional, but no one noticed that I was not happy.” #48

> “Performance management turned out to be one of the best experiences I have had as a head, but the process was arduous. It resulted in some excellent development (and bonuses), however, and kept the board and head in good stead.” #80

Table 33. End of tenure – Nature of departure and role of performance management

| | Role of performance management | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nature of departure | Not based on PM - % | Partly based on PM - % | Mainly based on PM - % | Completely based on PM - % |
| I chose to leave at the end of contract and not to accept a new contract | 75 | 18 | 2 | 5 |
| I chose to leave before the end of contract, dismissed early or not expecting renewal of contract | 61 | 33 | 6 | 0 |

A further analysis of the relationship between the nature of departure (Q10) and board relationship with head of school (Q4) does not present a clear picture. (Table 34)

Table 34: Relationship between tenure (the nature of departure) and the board relationship with the head of school.

| | Nature of departure | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Board relationship with head of school | Not based on PM - No. respondents | Partly based on PM – No. respondents | Mainly based on PM – No. respondents | Completely based on PM – No. respondents |
| Board goals were given to you. The board then closely monitored you. (Agent-principal) | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Partnership of shared goals and support. (Partnership) | 15 | 3 | | 1 |
| Support for school goals through board's expertise and resources. (Partnership) | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Guarding parents' goals and interests. (Other) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Board agreed goals with you then guided and monitored you at distance. (Partnership) | 13 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Board agreed goals with you then monitored you closely. (Agent-principal) | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Policy setting. You worked on goals within a monitored framework.(Other) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Context specific and variable. (Other) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Unclear | 4 | 5 | | 1 |

When grouping “Not based” with “Partly based” and “Mainly based” with “Completely based”, the data shows better that the board relationship with the head of school has little bearing on whether performance management forms the basis for departure. (Table 35)

Table 35. Relationship between tenure (nature of departure) and board relationship with the head of school– Summary within relationship groups

| | Tenure – Nature of departure | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Board relationship group with head of school | Not or partly based on PM - No. respondents | % | Mainly or completely based on PM - No. respondents | % |
| Agent-principal | 7 | 99 | 1 | 1 |
| Partnership | 38 | 95 | 2 | 5 |
| Other | 3 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Unclear | 9 | 90 | 1 | 10 |

Looking at the relationship between the board relationship (Q4) and tenure (Q1), (Table 36) the data shows that the tenure of the head of school is longer where the relationship is one of partnership. This is in line with what one might expect.

Table 36. Relationship between tenure and board relationship

| Board relationship | Tenure - Mean in years | Tenure – Median in years |
|---|---|---|
| Board goals were given to you. The board then closely monitored you. (Agent-principal) | 4.2 | 2.0 |
| Partnership of shared goals and support. (Partnership) | 8.1 | 7.0 |
| Support for school goals through board’s expertise and resources. (Partnership) | 6.6 | 5.0 |
| Guarding parents’ goals and interests. (Other) | 5.0 | 5.0 |
| Board agreed goals with you then guided and monitored you at distance. (Partnership) | 8.9 | 9.0 |
| Board agreed goals with you then monitored you closely. (Agent-principal) | 6.3 | 7.0 |
| Policy setting. You worked on goals within a monitored framework. (Other) | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| Context specific and variable. (Other) | 0 | 0 |
| Unclear | 4.2 | 4.0 |

A summary or the relationship groupings is shown in table 37.

Table 37. Relationship between tenure and board relationship group – Summary of relationship groups.

| Board relationship | Tenure - Mean in years | Tenure – Median in years |
|---|---|---|
| Agent-principal | 5.0 | 4.5 |
| Partnership | 8,2 | 7.0 |
| Other | 4.3 | 5.0 |
| Unclear | 4.2 | 4.0 |

Looking at the relationship between tenure (Q1) and the effectiveness of performance management (Q9), the mean results show tenure to be longer when performance management is completely or broadly effective. (Table 38) This is less clear from the median results.

Table 38. The relationship between tenure (Q1) and the effectiveness of performance management (Q9).

| Effectiveness of performance management | Tenure – Mean in years | Tenure – Median in years |
|---|---|---|
| Completely | 9.0 | 5.0 |
| Broadly | 9.0 | 7.0 |
| Minimally | 6.5 | 5.0 |
| Not at all | 3.6 | 3.0 |

With regards to the relationship between tenure (Q1) and nature of departure (Q10), (Table 39) those with the longest tenure at 9.7 years chose to leave before the end of contract. Those with the shortest tenure, 4.2 years, had their contracts “cut short”. The average tenure was considerably higher (10.5 years) when performance management was “mainly used” in decision-making.

Table 39. Relationship between tenure (nature of departure) and tenure

| | Tenure – in years | | | | Tenure | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tenure-Nature of departure | Not based on PM – Total years of respondents | Partly based on PM – Total years of respondents | Mainly based on PM – Total years of respondents | Completely based on PM – Total years of respondents | Tenure - Mean in years | Tenure - Median in years |
| I chose to leave at the end of contract and not to accept a new contract | 221 | 47 | 4 | 10 | 6.4 | 5.0 |
| I chose to leave before the end of contract | 73 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 9.7 | 9.0 |
| I left as my contract was cut short | 6 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 5.3 | 2.0 |
| I left at the end of contract as a new contract was not expected/ offered. | 1 | 7 | 17 | 0 | 7.3 | 3.5 |
| Tenure – Mean in years | 6.7 | 6.6 | 10.5 | 5.0 | | |
| Tenure – Median in years | 6.0 | 5.5 | 10.5 | 5.0 | | |

In the following chapter, I will discuss the data to see what might be learnt from it.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### 5.1 Discussion of findings

Interpretation is always an element in understanding, as context, beliefs, practices and traditions are important, claim Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba (2007, p.12). It is, they believe, "not simply an individual cognitive act but a social and political practice." As a head in international schools, my interest in this subject has been fuelled by my experience, so I have had to be aware of this and mindful of the potential bias in the way I have collected and analysed the data.

The number of participants in Phase 1 - the interviews - was quite small. However, rich data came to the fore from this qualitative approach which offered great insight into the experiences of the heads of school. Their diversity represents a cross section, albeit small, of international school heads. Phase 2, 2A and 3 - the questionnaires - did not yield such rich nuanced data but the sample was larger and offered greater input of views on specific themes. Nonetheless, one has to be careful when interpreting what mean and median values might indicate. The questionnaire data has been considered alongside and complementary to the interview data.

The first theme in this research relates to *expectations.* I explored the head of school's awareness and understanding of his or her roles and responsibilities; goals to be achieved; the definition of success; and board structure and relations.

*Degree of orientation*

In this research, 60% of questionnaire respondents felt that they were "fairly well" or "fully" informed about the school. (Table 9). Conversely, 40% felt that information was lacking, something that seven of the interview participants stated was the case. These heads of school generally felt that the board's expectations were not explained clearly and lacked detail. In short, more information was expected on the following: the head of school's roles and responsibilities; preferred dispositions, behaviour and approach; and goals and priorities of the board. This suggests that some boards may not share what is important to them, in which case communication is an issue. It is possible that boards have not considered what is important to them which would then raise concern about a board's

knowledge or vision. In both cases, it suggests that the board, as the employer, may not be well attuned to their role or aware of what is needed in school governance. With respect to the first, the lack of communication could lead to dissonance between the beliefs of the head of school and the board on leading the school, how this will be undertaken and what success will look like. Awareness of this misalignment could arise at any time but would almost certainly be exposed during a performance management process when the head of school could be subject to criteria for success that are unknown, arbitrary or contrary to those expected. Where lack of knowledge or vision may be the reason for not providing a clear orientation to the head of school, the board may not know how to assess school success or the performance of the head of school. Some participants intimated that dissonance sometimes revolved around how things were done rather than what was done. Only a few heads of school mentioned that during orientation the expectations of the board's preferred way of working or the relationship that it wished to have with the head of school was mentioned. This may be a critical omission from orientation; this is discussed later. I did not explore orientation more deeply in this research, but it would potentially be of interest.

*Board structure, membership and head of school relations*

The relationship between the head of school and the board is clearly important. Questionnaire data on the board structure and membership (Table 12) were found to be generally in line with the findings of Tangye (2005), Sorenson (2015) and Knobloch (2016). My research suggests that the structure and membership of a board itself seems to have a small effect on tenure where heads may have longer tenure where there are elected boards. (Table 13). This finding might surprise Littleford (2008) who believes that parent elected boards, though motivated, do not always have the necessary skills to ensure the longevity of heads of school.

While board structure and membership does not necessarily influence the relationship between the head of school and the board, the philosophical model of governance adopted by a board may. Viader and Espina (2014) state that in non-profit service organisations, 52% are driven by agency theory, 28% by stewardship or resource dependency theories and 20% are hybrids of these. This was not reflected in my questionnaire data. (Tables 14 and 15) Only 13% of respondents indicated that their relationship with the board reflected agent-principal theory while 64% implied a relationship more akin to stewardship or resource

dependency theories thus a form of partnership. A minority of heads of school (18%) stated that the relationship was unclear. In the latter case, difficulties may arise for a head of school who is unsure of the relationship. The interview data suggested that while the basic model of the relationship may have been understood by heads, the expression of the relationship and its changing nature were sometimes of concern. Seven of the ten heads of school seemed to struggle with this relationship.

The statutes, by laws and policies of the school may have a formal bearing on how the school is governed but the beliefs and values of board members coupled with their experience will likely shape the underlying governance model chosen. The personalities of board members and their specific behaviour may also play an important role in the relationship with the head of school. Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Knyght (2010) and Cornforth and Macmillan (2016) highlight the relationship between the board chair and the CEO in organisations with respect to power, authority and chemistry. Examples of this were clearly seen in the interview data where events and daily interactions were cited. These emphasized the potential importance and sensitivity of relationships with board members. From the interviews, the relationship with the board was frequently mentioned as having an impact on the work of the head of school. In short, it seems that when the relationship with the board chair was good and there was a high degree of trust, the relationship with the board seemed to be good. Where the relationship was bad, the relationship with the board was generally poor. This data is in line with the findings of Cornforth and Macmillan (2016).

> “The negotiation of the relationship is influenced by the relative differences in experience, skill, the extent to which each had established a position of authority in the organization, and the will, skill, and time necessary to use these power sources…Establishing mutual trust and respect were also important in developing a successful working relationship; when trust begins to break down, there is a danger the relationship can enter a downward spiral.” (Cornforth and Macmillan, 2016)

The school governance and leadership environment can be seen as a microcosm of society. From the interview data it seems boards were often a diverse group of

individuals, with varying perceptions of roles, responsibilities, and cultural norms, competing for position. The dispositions and capital (knowledge, cultural, social or symbolic) of board members could influence positioning between themselves as well as in interactions with the head of school. A collective understanding of governance by the board might result from this process but not necessarily. The interview data indicated that upon appointment the head of school had to negotiate and compete for his or her position and authority among the board members. The degree of assimilation to and acceptance by the board varied. One might expect that tenure would be longer if a good relationship exists. Indeed, this was the case from my interview data. Hill and James (2015) highlighted the importance of this relationship and the heads of school interviewed all mentioned the relationship with the board chair as critical with respect to their tenure.

*Changing expectations*

Changes in board membership were highlighted by interview participants as challenging, confirming the view of Hawley (1994:1995), Hayden (2006) and Benson (2011). If churning happens, which is often seen with parent boards on which ex-patriates serve, it is not long before the board is completely different from the one that selected the head of school. The research indicated that a new board often held or highlighted different values and beliefs so the perceived needs of the school and expectations relating to the head of school's roles, responsibilities and goals changed along with processes such as performance management. In addition to the challenge of adjusting to these changes, a head of school had to adjust to a new working relationship with the board. If there was a change in the board chair, a change in relationship and the working practice often followed. The challenges of such a change are reported in the interview data.

For some heads of school, the expectations changed before they took up the position. In one case (Participant 02), the board who appointed the head of school had made it clear what they wanted but, upon arrival, the board had completely changed and was, according to the head of school, "a tabula rasa waiting for his [the head of school's] ideas". While such a situation allows the head of school to propose goals, it could also mean that the board may be short of ideas or knowledge and experience of the school or governance in general. In any case, the board would need to agree on what success would look like and how it would be measured to ensure aligned expectations with the head. For other heads of

school, expectations changed mid-tenure. This was sometimes seen positively and at other times negatively. Some of the interview participants mentioned that a change in the board membership had had a bearing on the departure of the head of school because shared expectations and/or a working relationship could not be established or maintained. This is in line with the work of Hawley (1994:1995) who found that high board turnover led to shorter tenure.

Many situations were clearly frustrating for the heads of school in this study. The general sentiment seemed to be that if the school board has goals and criteria for the success of the school, these should be shared with the head of school and honoured. These goals and criteria are critical as they would logically underpin the performance management process for the head of school. The data (mean values) suggest that when the board shares expectations with the head of school, tenure is longer. However, median values do not indicate a clear pattern. (Table 10)

The second theme covers *performance management* of heads of school and relates to how boards conceive, structure and organise performance management was revealing. There were appraisal processes, evaluations and less formal conversations according to the interview participants. These are grouped under the umbrella term of performance management in this study. The data from the interviews show that the status given to the process varies.

*Status of the performance management process*

The status of the performance management process was implied in comments by participants in interview. Five spoke of fairly specific goals but how they were monitored and discussed by the board was generally informal. One indicated that the goals were inappropriate. Four indicated that they had to initiate a process and provide goals to the board. In a couple of cases, this was done with the board. Overall, one intimated that the process was thorough while the others offered varying opinions on the effectiveness of the performance management process. The comments together suggest that the status afforded to the performance management process for the head of school by the board was not high. However, another view would be that the board trusted the head of school to do what is right, perhaps based on the general conversations about school and what needed doing which were fairly common. This is discussed further in the organization of the process.

*Structure of the performance management process*

Evidence from the interviews suggest that the heads of school themselves were involved in choosing the criteria for the performance management process in about half the cases. This was similar in the questionnaire data where heads of school, either alone or with the board, were involved in 51% of cases. (Table 16 and 17) This more inclusive 'negotiated' approach was not mentioned much in the literature reviewed. However, Sinnema and Robinson (2012) note that the use of head of school goals is beneficial, in terms of performance. On the surface, this seems sound. The board might be truly interested in a head of school's views and ideas as the head of school is responsible for the day to day operation of the school. They may value a partnership model of governance. However, it might also be that boards do not know what criteria would be suitable and are seeking help from the head of school. It was mentioned by some interviewees that the criteria for the performance management were not always known. Members of a board who have not served in that capacity before might be short of experience, a point raised by Krüger, van Eck and Vermeulen (2005). In the context of the UK, Spicer et al. (2014) also noted there was a "lack of, and need for, systematic guidance and support around the effective management of headteachers' performance." With no requirement for professional development, boards may not see their training and education as necessary, important or even useful.

Interestingly, despite much work in the US (Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) and UK (National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers published by the Department for Education (DfE) to define suitable standards for heads of school, few schools referred to them and only 3% of schools in my research used external standards exclusively (Table 16). This would suggest a school-specific approach by boards. A lack of awareness of standards or a belief that they are not suitable may be reasons for the low percentage using external agency standards. However, it is also possible that such standards are tacitly used by boards in their designs.

Data from the questionnaires suggest that when the criteria are determined by the head of school and the board together, the head of school is more likely to feel fully informed of the board's expectations than if the criteria are determined in a different way. (Table 18) The link between the two is important and indicates an

open relationship. Clear initial expectations and agreed criteria for a performance management process should bode well for performance.

*Organisation of the performance management process*

From the questionnaire data, 53% of heads of school were involved in a formal and regular performance management process. (Table 20) One might conclude from this that just over half the boards see the importance of the process. In 21% of cases, a formal process was in place though inconsistently used. This suggests that the board has given thought to the process and thus accord it some status but lacked discipline or interest in following through regularly. In schools where 13% of heads of school indicated the process was informal and inconsistent the board seem either not to have given much status to a performance management process or lacked the skills to put a process in place. Different systems were used during the tenure of 12 heads of school which indicates an unstable and inconsistent approach to performance management in those schools. In summary, this reflects the research of Thomas, Holdaway and Ward (2000) who found performance to be inconsistently measured.

Questionnaire data reveal that the board, as a whole, is involved in conducting the performance management of the head of school in 71% of cases. (Table 19) The board Chair is solely involved in a further 22% of cases. As 54% of heads of school did not participate in the performance management process, this might reinforce the notion that about half the boards see their role in performance management as one of judgment or evaluation and less one of partnership. These data indicate that the head of school is being held accountable without input on performance management in about half the cases. In 20% cases, others, such as teachers, were involved in the process. This seems quite low if one supports the view of Goldring, Mavrogordato and Haynes (2015) who point out that teachers may be best positioned to make assessments on certain aspects of a head of school's work.

*Outcome of performance management process*

The outcome of the process is ultimately important. Data from questionnaire respondents suggest that more than half (55%) of all heads of school, considered the feedback to be limited or non-existent (Table 21) which mirrors the findings of the Wallace Foundation (2009) who found this the case for almost 50% of leaders.

This could arise from a belief that boards consider performance management to be for their benefit - as an accountability tool – and that feedback to the head of school is not particularly important. Equally, it could be because boards do not know how to give helpful feedback. This is possible especially if the feedback relates to educational matters or matters not directly related to their interactions with the head of school.

My research suggests that if the board's relationship with the head of school is characterized by one of partnership, the process is more likely to be formal and regular. (Table 23) Still further, the data suggest that when board expectations are given to the head of school performance management is likely to be formal and regular (Table 24). Cross referencing the formality of the process with the quality of feedback (Table 22), we see that when the process is formal and regular, feedback is more likely to be comprehensive. If the process is informal, irregular and feedback on the performance is poor or absent, the head of school may have challenges gauging his or her alignment with the board's view of success and his or her performance. In addition, the board will have lost an opportunity to establish or reinforce understanding on direction, nurture a professional relationship and offer professional development, and to the head of school. These findings complement those of Hawley (1994:1995) who found that heads with two evaluations per year had a longer tenure than those without evaluations.

The third overriding theme was the *value* of performance management. This was explored by looking at the purpose and effectiveness of the process.

*Purpose of performance management*

Of the questionnaire respondents 46% reported both accountability and professional development as the purpose of performance management in their schools. (Table 25) Accountability alone was the main purpose in 36% of cases while there were other reasons in 8% of situations. In 10% of cases, heads of school said that they did not know the purpose; clearly not a good situation and of concern to these heads of school. These results broadly mirrored those found in the interviews though there were more nuances in those responses. These data suggest that purpose is generally known by the heads of school which is generally reflected in the research outlined in the literature review. There is little indication in my data that the design of the performance management system is more likely to

reflect a balance between accountability and professional development when the relationship between the head of school and the board is characterized as one of partnership or agent-principal. (Table 26)

*Effectiveness of performance management*

In the questionnaire data on the effectiveness of the process heads of school may have evaluated the structure, purpose, implementation, feedback or, a combination of these. My assumption is that the effectiveness is judged holistically and on whether it leads to anything positive for the head of school or the school. The questionnaire data shows that 43% felt their performance management process was broadly or completely effective. (Table 27) Data also show that this was primarily when the board relationship with the head of school was one characterized as partnership. (Table 28 and 29) However, the data on effectiveness also mean that 59% of the respondents showed little confidence or belief in their performance management process, a feeling also prevailing among interview participants. This reflects the research of Portin, Fedman and Knapp (2006) who reported that principal evaluation was often seen as perfunctory. This research, along with Davis et al. (2011); Goldring et al. (2009a; 2009b) and Portin, Feldman and Knapp (2006), found evaluations to be viewed by principals as simplistic, not aligned with appropriate standards and rarely displaying rigour. In the interviews, participants voiced concern on various levels: the design of performance management with unclear expectations and criteria; lack of formality and regularity; and limited feedback. Boards might consider the potential impact of having an effective performance management process and what would need to be in place to ensure a strong one is established and maintained. My data mirror the findings of Fuller all (2015). Boards might also reflect on the potential effects of a poor or absent process particularly when looking at tenure.

Finally, I considered the theme of *tenure* and whether there was any perceived link with decisions on leaving the position.

*Impact of performance management.*

The data in this research suggests that the median tenure (length of time in the position of head of school) is longer than the 3.7 years that Benson (2011) found or the 2.8 years that Hawley (1994:1995) revealed. My findings suggest that the tenure of heads of international schools is longer with an average (median) of 5

years and average (mean) of 6.9 years. The median of 5 years might a more realistic figure as a number of long-term heads of school appear to skew the data. This was seen when the longest serving heads (22%) were omitted and the mean dropped to 4.9 years. (Table 30)

The mean result was a little surprising. However, as indicated earlier, the ambiguity of Question 1 (length of time at school) and the limited response to my two attempts to verify the data as “length of time as head of school” could have an inflationary effect on the mean. In other words, there could be heads of school in the data who did not respond to my verification checks who had held a different position in the school and included these years in their response to Question 1. In addition, it should be noted that heads of school recalled an experience from any time in the past. The years of tenure given by participants could cover any period since about the time of Hawley’s study (1994:95).

Interestingly, and in contrast to the main findings, Phase 3, data showed that 28% of heads of school were in new positions after one year. Taking this as a sample one might conclude that, as this is just over a quarter of the respondents, all respondents will have changed position in four years thus giving an average tenure of four years. This is somewhat lower than my other data and more in line with the findings of Benson (2011).

Concerning why heads of school leave, the questionnaire data show that a large number (71%) state that they chose to leave at the end of contract and not to accept a new or anticipated new contract. (Table 31) In one of my conversations with Littleford in 2018, he challenged this figure. He stressed that in his conversations with thousands of heads of school in US independent schools and international schools over many years he believed that ‘80%’ were effectively fired. This figure included those whose contracts were not renewed. It is surprising that his view and my findings should differ so great. This is difficult to explain.

With respect to performance management, the questionnaire data showed that for the heads of school who left early, were dismissed early or left not expecting renewal of contract, 94% claimed that it was not or only partly based on performance management. Performance management did not appear to be factor in whether departure was voluntary or involuntary. (Table 32) This means that only

6% said that their leaving was mainly or completely related to performance management. A similar figure (7%) was recorded for those who chose to leave at the end of contract and not to accept a new or anticipated new contract. This would suggest that when it comes to decisions about leaving, the results of performance management had little importance for the board or for the head of school irrespective of the relationship. (Table 35) These data are the perceptions of heads of school so it is possible that performance management was an underlying yet unspoken factor in decisions taken by the board. However, if performance management processes are only considered effective (broadly or completely) in only 41% of cases (Table 27), perhaps this is not surprising. However, when we look at those heads of school who felt that their performance management was broadly or completely effective, we see that their tenure is longer (mean data) than for those who felt the performance management was ineffective. (Table 38) The data suggest that when performance management is formal and regular, feedback is likely to be comprehensive. In such cases one might expect that the process would be considered effective. If we see performance management as the formal professional dialogue between the board and the head of school, a process that can help ensure that both parties understand what success will look like, how it will be measured and how feedback will be provided, this would surely help the head of school be successful.

In summary, cross analysis of the data suggested that tenure is likely to be longer when the head of school is informed of expectations (Table 10), when the board structure and membership could be described as elected (Table 13), where the relationship might broadly be described as one of partnership (Table 36), and when the performance management process is considered broadly or completely effective (Table 38). Formal and regular performance management was more likely to lead to comprehensive feedback.

However, if a performance management process is in place or not, whether it is considered good enough or not or even if it is implemented regularly or not, boards will still determine whether the school and the head of school are successful. The data suggest that performance management may not be used to a great extent in schools or in decision making so how do boards make decisions about the tenure of a head of school? While on paper performance management could be the foundation of a professional relationship, it appears that the relationship between

the board, especially the board chair, and the head of school is something more important. Throughout the interviews the relationship with the board was a recurring theme. Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Knyght, 2010 refer to two levels of chemistry between a CEO and a board chair, analytical interpretive capacity (sense-making) and deep friendship (philos). Heads of school are likely to have similar challenges in building such relationships. Chojnacki (2007) highlights this relationship as important and Hawley (1994:1995) notes that 75% of respondents in his research mentioned that their leaving was related to the board. Those interviewed in my research mentioned the relationship in some way but went further, in all but two cases, by stating that the relationship was more important than any process of performance management.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate performance management of international school leaders in not-for-profit schools. While there have been studies in the US (Condon and Clifford, 2010; Davis et al., 2011) little if anything appears to have been written on performance management in the leadership of international schools.

The position of head of school in not-for-profit international schools is multi-faceted (Fisher, 2011; Hill, 2014)) where responsibilities not only cover matters related to education but all those associated with running a not-for-profit organisation. It is the job of the board to find the right person to run the school and it is in the best interests of the school to help ensure that the head is successful. Literature suggests that longevity of leadership - tenure - is generally considered valuable (Littleford, 2005; Fullan 2007,). As an essential part of the board's work (DfE, 2017; Cumberland et al, 2015), performance management could play a key role in the success of the head of school.

In this study, the tenure of heads of international schools appears to be longer than found in the work of Hawley (1994:1995) or Benson (2011). My research revealed interesting findings on the impact of performance management on international school heads. Various themes came to the fore which heads of school and board members might reflect on.

Expectations

One might expect that a board would wish to ensure that a new head of school were fully appraised of the school's guiding statements and its cultural context as well as the board's beliefs and values relating to the direction of the school and what constitutes success in the school. In this research, heads of school indicated that boards could do better at clarifying these expectations. Other than a wish for a shared understanding of and alignment with the goals and priorities at the start of employment, heads of school recognised the need to understand how the board wanted to work and any expectations relating to the relationship with the board.

This research suggests that when the head of school is informed of expectations tenure is likely to be longer. As expectations of performance or success typically form the basis of a performance management system, it is important that there is

agreement between the board and the head of school on, what constitutes success for the school and how it will be measured. This is primarily the responsibility of the board chair. However, prospective heads of school might take note that clarity on expectations is important upon appointment and preferably before.

Professional dialogue

One can see performance management then as an ongoing professional dialogue between the board and the head of school. Only one interviewee spoke truly positively about their performance management process. Others experienced issues relating to the planning, implementation and institutionalization of a performance management process. Questionnaire data show that formal and regular performance management, evaluation or appraisal processes are not ubiquitous in the not-for-profit international schools of this study. Where performance management exists, it varies in terms of structure, regularity and effectiveness. There are a number of reasons that might explain this. For example: the board may trust the head to do the right things without a process; the board may not understand how to organize effective performance management; or the board may be lazy and not take this part of school of governance seriously.

When considering the process, heads of school interviewed stated that accountability should play an important part in the process yet expressed a belief and wish that professional development should also be central to it, a position held by Bowley (2001) and Matthews (2002). This combined approach was found in almost half the cases in this study. Just over half the heads experienced a formal regular process and, of these, more than four fifths reported comprehensive feedback. As Hawley (1994:1995) noted, two evaluations per year lead to longer tenure for the head than when no evaluations are undertaken yet my research showed that formal and regular performance management was not widespread, and feedback was considered insufficient by more than half the respondents.

If performance management is understood to be a professional dialogue then in more than half the cases, communication is not effective. This would not bode well for the working relationship or indeed the achievement of goals. Boards might consider what they know about performance management and how it can be used as professional dialogue with the head of school on achieving success in the

school. Where knowledge of effective practice is lacking, boards should consider seeking professional training or bringing in professionals to conduct a process. This could be beneficial for the success of school. Prospective heads of school are advised to ask about the direction of the school, its goals and priorities at an early stage. Still further, he or she should ask how the board measures school success and specifically how the board will measure his or her success. Information on the performance management process, including its purpose, design and implementation might also contribute to an assessment by the prospective head on whether the school is a good fit.

Change

The effective design and implementation of a performance management process may be affected by various factors as mentioned. One further factor might be instability among boards. While this study suggests that the structure of the board and its membership is not a critical factor in head of school tenure albeit that tenure was slightly longer with elected boards than with self-perpetuating or hybrid boards, my interview data indicated a negative effect of high turnover of board members. Disruption to board functioning and consequent changes in the board's way of working were not uncommon. The school's priorities and performance management processes were commonly seen to change as a result. Heads of school found these changes frustrating and difficult to manage. Changing expectations, reports Hawley (1994:1995), affect head of school tenure. Importantly, participants in this study stated that a change of board chair often resulted in a change in the relationship with the head of school. This relationship was often less productive than the one established with a chair at the outset of employment. This could be because a perceived chemistry between the chair and the head of school was felt at interview and, in part led to employment whereas a chair appointed midway through a head of school's tenure may not have had input on the choice of head of school and effectively him or her. Fisher (2011) and Littleford (2008) suggest that turnover in board membership in general is considered high in international schools so the prevalence of changing expectations is a concern. It should also be noted that interviewees highlighted the fact that expectations could change through the caprice of boards where turnover was not the catalyst. Boards might reflect on the negative aspects of high turnover and impulsive actions that lead to changing expectations of the head of school.

Boards should plan how they will maintain stability in expectations and, if change is necessary, how this can be achieved professionally.

Board relations

The relationship between the board and the head of school appears to have a great influence on performance management and tenure. In this study, a governance model characterised as one of partnership was seen to lead to more effective performance management and longer tenure. A partnership relationship seems to be founded on close and open professional and personal interactions. Trust is a key element in such a partnership. This would seem to contrast with the view of Cumberland et al. (2015) who saw performance management as one characterised by agency theory. Where partnership was seen, such as in the shared determination of criteria for performance management and participation in the process, it appears more likely that the process will be considered effective yet the data from this study showed that only half the heads were involved in the design of criteria and just under half were included in the performance process itself, perhaps an indication of an agency theory approach in more cases than understood to be the case my many heads.

The importance of the relationship between the board chair and the head of school was apparent in the interviews. While working with boards in general was a challenge for many, the relationship with the chair was seen as critical to the success of the head of school. Kakabadse, Kakabadse and Knyght (2010) refer to two elements that make up the chemistry of this relationship: analytical interpretative capacity (sense making) and deep friendship (philos). While clarity of expectations is important for the head of school, perhaps only belief, will and time can help ensure that an effective and durable relationship between the head of school and the board chair is established. Trust is then built. It was evident that when this relationship was good, all went well. Conversely, when trust was lost, tenure was limited. Boards and heads of school may wish to consider not only what constitutes a good working relationship between the board and the head of school but how it will be established and nourished. It will surely require honesty, trust and respect by both parties.

Tenure

Interestingly, in this research, the performance management process in general was rarely mentioned as having any bearing on the departure of heads of school. In situations where the relationship between the head of school and the board was considered good, it is possible that this positive relationship, particularly with the board chair, could be reinforced through the building of trust. This would lead to a virtuous cycle. As this developed the role of performance management as professional dialogue might diminish over time. This was indicated in some of my data where discussions between the head and the board about performance became informal or even cursory. I would suggest that the departure of the head of school might have than been as a result of a break in the relationship rather than as a result of performance management. In situations where the relationship between the head of school and board was not so good, the results of a performance management process may have been only secondary to the underlying issues of the relationship. In addition, bearing in mind that only half the heads in the study believed performance management to be effective, it is not surprising that the processes were not seen as a factor in their departure. So, what can be learnt from this?

Armstrong and Baron (2005, p.29) caution that “what is meaningful is not measurable and what is measurable is not meaningful.” While this is open to interpretation, it seems to resonate in this research. The meaningfulness of relationships, seen to be important in this research, are not always measurable. On the other hand, a performance management process, with measurable outcomes, was not seen to be meaningful, or at least effective, by half the heads. Perhaps, for this reason, performance management does not play a major role in helping achieve success in many schools and does not have an impact on the tenure of heads of school.

## 6.1 Summary of findings

1. Orientation to expectations of goals and the relationship with the board are not seen to be explicit enough for most interviewees and just under half of the questionnaire respondents.
2. Just under half the heads of school actively participated in the performance management process.

3. Performance management is focused on both accountability and professional development in nearly half the cases and accountability alone in just over one third of cases.
4. Just over half the heads of school experienced formal regular performance management.
5. Performance management is more likely to be formal and regular when the relationship with the board is characterized as one of partnership.
6. Formal and regular processes were more likely to lead to comprehensive feedback.
7. Feedback to heads of school is considered insufficient in just over half the cases of those interviewed.
8. Performance management processes are effective in about half the cases.
9. The outcome of performance management is generally considered more effective where the relationship between the board and the head of school is characterised as one of partnership and where criteria for the performance management process are shared.
10. Tenure was likely to be longer when board expectations were shared with the head of school.
11. Tenure tended to be slightly longer for those in schools with elected boards.
12. Tenure was longer when the board's relationship with the head of school was characterised as one of partnership.
13. A large majority of heads of school (71%) chose to leave their positions on their own volition and for personal reasons.
14. Tenure is not much influenced by performance management.
15. Tenure seems to be influenced more by personal relationships with the board than by performance management.

## 6.2 Significance of this research

This study led to some important findings. These findings are presented with my analysis and may resonate with others. In particular, I hope the study will stimulate reflection among heads and board members on their own situations. For schools seeking stability in leadership and looking to build success, this thesis offers thoughts on the optimization of performance management and the working relationship between the head and the board that might be of help.

*Practice in the leadership of international schools*

Heads of not-for-profit international schools are appointed to lead schools. Nonetheless, it is usually the board who appoints the head and so in this way, as well as in its approach to selecting, orientating and managing the head and his or her performance, the board also leads the school.

This research suggests that boards need first to reflect on what is needed to ensure the right leader will found, chosen and prepared for the position. The establishment of a working relationship with the head of school as well as his or her orientation to the goals of the school also seem to be critical. With respect to the relationship, I offer data on what might be needed for success. Certainly, trust is a major component. Boards and heads of school might consider how this might be established and maintained. The relationship between the board chair and the head of school was seen to be pivotal for many in this study. To relieve some pressure on this relationship other board members might consider playing an active role in facilitating the relationship in addition to building their own relationship with the head of school. However, a good relationship may not be enough for success. The orientation of the head of school to the board's thoughts on what success might look like is expected by heads of school in this study. Equally, a head of school would expect boards to be open to the views of the paid professional leader of the school. This research suggests that the establishment of a professional dialogue in the form of a transparent, formal and regular process of performance management with purpose and criteria agreed by the board and the head of school seems to offer a structured way for the school to achieve its goals and an objective-based decision-making process for accountability and professional development. This in turn could lead to a stronger relationship and longer tenure for the head of school.

*Policy in international schools*

Boards of not-for-profit international schools are generally independent and specific to one school. Policy is normally determined by the board of the school and easily put into practice. There are indications in this study of how policy might steer successful practice. In some countries, national requirements apply equally to independent international schools. This research could therefore be of interest to school boards and to those national bodies in policy development. With regards

to the latter, the findings might be considered in the criteria used for inspections. Putting national requirements aside, the independent accreditation process that many schools choose to undertake, such as through CIS, already incorporate criteria that point to the need for a productive relationship between the board and the head of school as well as the need for an effective performance management process. Nonetheless, this research might prompt a review.

*Methodology*

In adopting a mixed methods approach, I established a position based on two paradigms and embraced two ontologies - nominalism and realism. The suitability of this approach, in being able to draw on the strengths of each, was reinforced as I came to see that the interviews offered incredibly rich feedback that helped my understanding of what heads of school think. This data enabled me to construct a questionnaire that I could feel confident would be relevant to a larger group of heads. It allowed feedback from this group on important topics, albeit without detail or explanation in most cases. The transferability and applicability of the results to other situations is limited. However, the ideas that emerged and were responded to by heads of not-for-profit international schools may be of interest to others in similar contexts. This mixed methods approach has not been employed in this context before.

*Development of new knowledge*

I believe this thesis is valuable in illuminating for the first time the place of performance management in the lives of heads in not-for-profit international schools. It breaks new ground in positioning performance management as more than a bureaucratic exercise rather one characterised as a professional dialogue linked closely to the relationship between the board and the head of school. In highlighting the importance of the relationship between the head and the board, specifically the board chair, it reinforces the findings of research in other contexts. However, this research also suggests that performance management is a process that is not given great attention in not-for-profit international schools when perhaps it should be. It highlighted the need for a process with greater status; clarity and transparency around success criteria for the head and the school, one that is implemented professionally and that offers effective feedback leading to professional development.

This research also suggests for the first time that the length of time in position (tenure) is not related to performance management. The suggestion that a process termed performance management has little to do with whether a head stays of leaves is surprising and deserves greater attention by boards.

*Personal reflections upon the research*

I was pleased to find that a topic of interest to me was also of interest to heads of school; they had much to say. I found this in interviews where participants were open, honest and generally comfortable with discussing the topic. It was a privilege to hear of their experiences and it would have been interesting to have heard from more.

My readings over the years provided a good grounding for the approach to my thesis; however, as I read more during this study, my understanding deepened. The literature review opened up many aspects of the subject and led to difficult decisions on what was relevant and important. The time needed to fully appreciate what is being said in the literature with regards to key points, nuances in terminology and underlying philosophies or the thought that is needed to compare and contrast ideas when there are different contexts and periods of times, is considerable. I needed to remain focused on the topic and put aside tangential sources without losing important context. In particular, I had to ensure that the context of international schools was clear as it is one not found to a large extent in the literature.

Considering the methodology, and the qualitative part of my research, I now know more about phenomenology and am confident that my interviewing technique would be stronger if I were to do this again. Similarly, with respect to coding, I am sure that this would be easier, clearer and stronger if done again. Concerning the quantitative part of the research, the sampling and communication techniques were satisfactory though could be improved in future research. Nonetheless, I believe the questions brought forth good data and that the findings from the analysis are sufficiently robust to offer a clear picture of the impact of performance management on heads of not-for-profit international schools. This allowed me in the conclusion to offer pointers on how heads and boards might work together better and use performance management as the professional dialogue between them to further success in the school.

In summary, I came to appreciate more fully the complexities and challenges of undertaking research as well as the time that is needed to do it well. I have very much enjoyed this research study over three years and the EdD units of study followed earlier. It has been an enormous challenge while working as a head of school but hugely enriching. I have become even more philosophical and I certainly feel wiser for the experience.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Information provided to potential participants in the research.

Dear Head of School,

I am contacting you in connection with my doctoral thesis at the University of Bath, the topic of which I think will be of particular interest to you – the relationship between the board and the head of school. More specifically, I am focusing on the performance management of heads of international schools.

This subject, which includes evaluation and appraisal, may be seen as the professional communication between the board and the head. However, unlike systems and processes for teachers, it seems to have received little attention. I want to rectify this. As the head of an international school myself, I am keen to understand the nature, role and impact of performance management in the lives of other heads.

Initially, I would like to interview about ten heads who have been employed by boards. I want to hear about your experiences of performance management. These thoughts will contribute to a survey [questionnaire] that will be designed to understand the nature and role of performance management among a larger sample of heads. This survey [questionnaire] will be sent to the heads of international schools registered with the Academy of International Heads (AISH) and International Headteacher.

I want to shed some light on the various aspects of performance management that I hope will be of help to heads and boards.

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and understand how the information contained in their interview will be used. This information sheet is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of the research and the how you will be involved in it. The consent form is necessary as confirmation you agree to the conditions of your participation.

Please would you read the information below and then sign the consent form to confirm that you approve the following:

- the interview will take about 30-40 mins;
- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced;
- you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time;

- you will be sent the transcript and given the opportunity to correct any factual errors, should you wish;
- the transcript of the interview will be kept and analysed by Simon Taylor as research investigator;
- access to the interview transcript will be limited to Simon Taylor; academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process; and you the participant;
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available in my thesis, through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify you is not revealed;
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval.

Many thanks.

Simon Taylor

**Consent Form**

Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the research project above being undertaken by Simon Taylor. By signing this form I agree that;

1. I have read the Information sheet;
2. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
3. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
4. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
5. I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

_____

Printed Name

_____

Participant's Signature Date

_____

Researcher's Signature Date

Contact Information

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Bath Research Ethics Board.

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Name of researcher: Simon Taylor
Full address. [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
Tel: [redacted]
E-mail: [redacted]

You can also contact Simon Taylor's supervisor: Professor Chris James
Full address: Department of Education
1 West North 3.17
Tel: +44 (0) 1225 38 3280
Email: c.james@bath.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Interview questions – Phase 1

1a. What were the roles and responsibilities expected of you by the board?
1b. What were the roles and responsibilities you assumed?

2a. How would best describe how the board expected you to lead?
2b. How did you lead?

3a. What attributes did the board expect you to exhibit?
3b. What attributes did you feel you exhibited?

4a. What was the structure of the board?
4b. What was the approach of the board? How did it see its role and relationship with you?

5a. What defined success for the board?
5b What defined success for you?

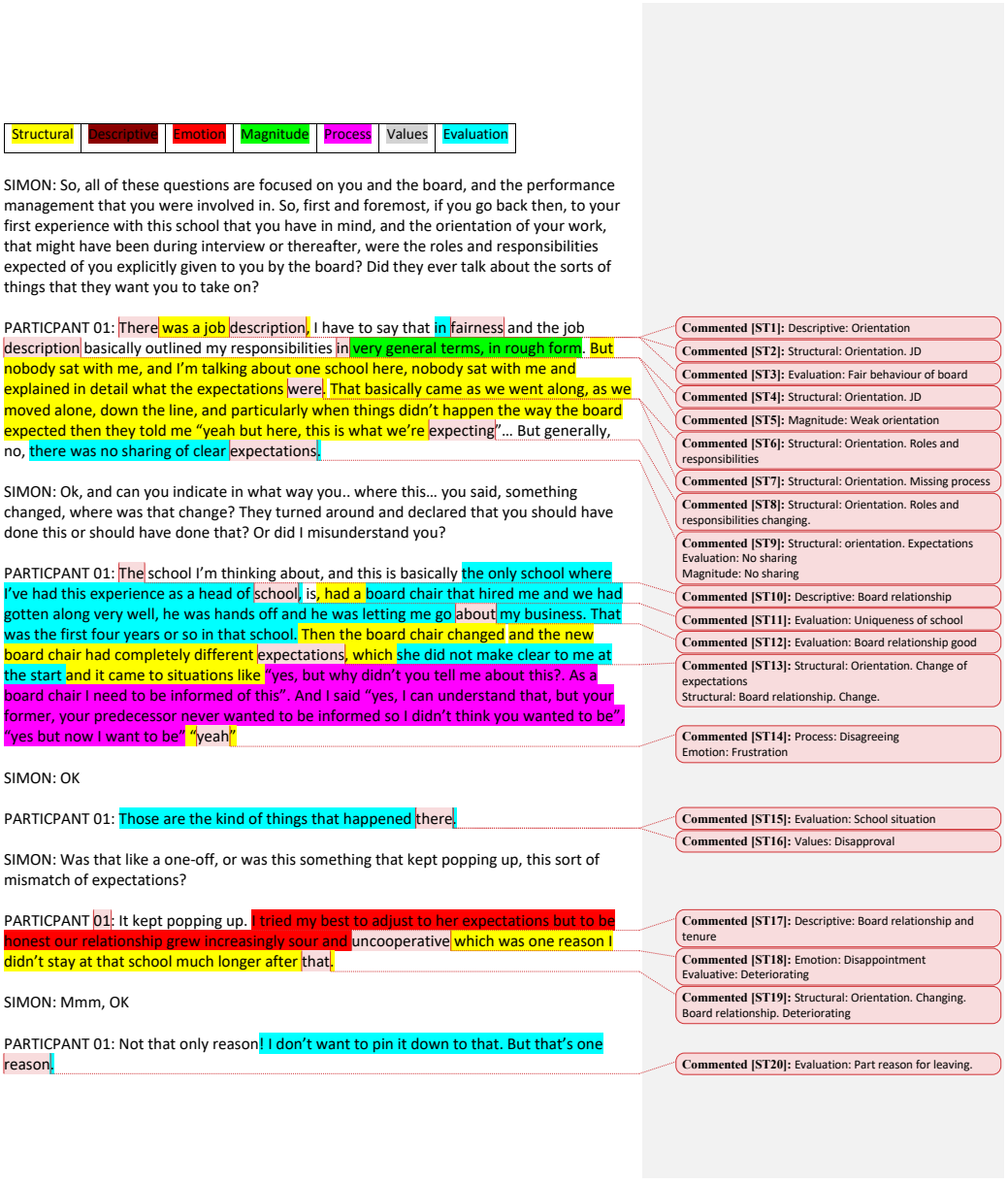
6a. Who was involved in the performance management (PM) process?
6b Who do you think should be involved in the performance management (PM) process?

7a. What was the purpose of performance management?
7b. What do you think should be the purpose of performance management?

8a. What criteria were used by the board in your performance management (PM)
8b. What criteria do you think should be used by the board in your performance management (PM)?

9a. To what extent, did the board state a link between the PM system and contract renewal?
9b. To what extent, do you think the board linked the PM system to contract renewal?

# Appendix 3: Coding example – Phase 1



Appendix 4: Questionnaire – Phase 2

Many thanks for offering to take this questionnaire. If after completing it you would be willing to participate in a possible follow up, please send me an email.

This questionnaire is part of my doctoral research at the University of Bath My research topic is the relationship between the boards and the heads of school/principals of international schools and in particular the performance management of the head of school/principal. Performance management includes the formal evaluation and appraisal procedures used by the board.I would like to understand your experiences of performance management

Before you begin, please would you read the information.

The questionnaire should take about 15 minutes

- The questionnaire will be kept and analysed by Simon Taylor as the research investigator; access to the questionnaire data will be limited to Simon Taylor; academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process; and you the participant;

- The data will be kept confidentially by the survey host, Survey Monkey;

- Any questionnaire content, that are made available in my thesis through academic publication or other academic outlets, will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify you is not revealed;

- In undertaking this research Simon Taylor has no intention to harm any individual or institution.

Please recall one international school where you began and finished work as a head of school/principal. Please keep this school in mind as you answer the questions.

1. How many years were you in the school you have selected?

0 20

2. Were you informed of the Board's expectations relating to your role and responsibilities or the goals and priorities of the Board during your tenure?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| O | Not informed | O | Fairly well informed |
| O | Loosely informed | O | Fully informed |

Please add a comment if you wish

3. What was the structure and membership of the board?

| | Parents of students in school | Members without students in school |
|---|---|---|
| Elected - Parent elected members | O | O |
| Self-perpetuating - board chosen members | O | O |
| Hybrid – Parent elected and board chosen members | O | O |

Please add a comment if you wish

4. How did the Board see its role and relationship with you?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| O | Board goals were given to you. The Board then closely monitored you. | O | Board agreed goals with you then monitored you closely. |
| O | Partnership of shared goals and support | O | Policy setting. You worked on goals within a monitored framework |
| O | Support for school goals through Board's expertise and resources | O | Context specific and variable |
| O | Guarding parents goals and interests | O | Unclear |
| O | Board agreed goals with you then guided and monitored you at distance | | |

Please add a comment if you wish

5. What sort of performance management process for you was in place during your tenure?

   If there was no performance management process for you, please go directly to question 10.

| | No feedback | Limited feedback | Comprehensive feedback | Written only | Verbal only | Written and verbal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Formal and regular (at least annual) | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| Formal and inconsistent | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| Informal and regular (at least annual) | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| Informal and inconsistent | o | o | o | o | o | o |

Please add a comment if you wish

6. Who was involved in the performance management process?

- o Whole board
- o Board chair
- o You, as head of school/principal
- o Staff
- o Parents.
- o Students
- o Outside agency
- o Unclear

Please add a comment if you wish

7. What was the purpose of the performance management process?

O Your accountability

O Your accountability and professional development

O Your professional development

O There was no perceived purpose

O Other

Please add a comment if you wish

8. What were the specific criteria used in the performance management process?

O Board's own generic standards

O External agency standards

O Board's goals

O Other criteria

O Your goals

O No specific criteria

O Your roles and responsibilities

Please add comment if you wish

9. To what extent did you feel that the performance management process was effective?

O Not at all

O Minimally

O Broadly

O Completely

Please add a comment if you wish

10. Did the performance management process play any role in your contract renewal and your departure?

| | Not based on performance management | Partly based on performance management | Mainly based on performance management | Completely based on performance management |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I chose to leave before the end of contract. | O | O | O | O |
| I chose to leave at the end of contract and not to accept a new contract. | O | O | O | O |
| I left as my contract was cut short. | O | O | O | O |
| I left at the end of contract as a new contract was not expected/offered. | O | O | O | O |

Appendix 5: Questionnaire – Phase 2A

Thank you for participating in this revision of your response to 01 of the original questionnaire that you kindly completed. Your revision to the data of Question 1 is really important. My apologies for the lack of clarity in the original question

1. How many years were you head of school/principal in the school you selected?

0 25

2. What response did you give in the original full questionnaire?

0 25

3. As this questionnaire is also anonymous, and I need to adjust the original response to Question 1, is there a quick way that I can distinguish your original questionnaire responses from those of other participants?

0 25

Appendix 6: Questionnaire - Phase 3

Performance management questionnaire – 6 month follow up

Thank you so much for participating in this brief follow up to the questionnaire you completed in May 2018. Your answers will help validate [sic] my findings.

1. In the questionnaire you completed in May 2018, how many years were you head of school in the school you chose to recall from the past?

0 25

2. Which country were you in when you completed the survey in May 2018?

3. As a head of school, have you changed school (or organisation) since May 2018?
   Yes/No